



Northern Illinois District  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

# Ministry UPDATE

WINTER 2022

## President's Commentary *Some Thoughts on Being Joyful*

The discussion in my office was intense. Voices raised and feelings hurt. It was pastoral care in the midst of a marriage crisis.

*"This is a joyless marriage,"* one said. Things got very quiet. The other said, *"This is a loveless marriage!"*

These have been a difficult couple of years for several reasons for our workers, congregations, lay-leaders, and schools. Challenges ahead for sure. **Have we become a joyless church?** Where is joy to be found and given in our midst? Is joy not important?

Well, it must be kind of important! Our Lord Jesus has said, *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that **your joy may be full**"* (John 15:11). The next verses connect His sacrificial love with our love.

I am intrigued by this passage from the Lutheran Confessions speaking of saving faith: *"... people are righteous by faith, by which they believe that God is reconciled, and he adds that this same faith makes alive, because it produces peace, joy, and eternal life in the heart."* (Apology of the Augsburg Confession)

We live in serious times. We deal with serious matters. We face Satan and an increasingly antagonistic culture and country. We repent of our own sin, both selfishness and self-righteousness.

Yet, with King David and the Church through the ages, we sing, *"Restore to us the joy of our salvation."* That is both a prayer and confession of faith. The Lord is the giver of Salvation and that is a gift. The future of the Church and Gospel proclamation is under the direction and

protection of the Lord of the church. He is in charge!

Some thoughts on being joyful:

Listen closely and often to the Word of God read, taught, and proclaimed.

Rejoice in the gifts given in Christ for the Church and the world.

Celebrate and give thanks more often in your life and congregation.

Take your fear, anger, and self-serving opinions to Christ in exchange for true love and true joy.

Trust God as you listen and encourage others.

Keep the main thing the main thing - Jesus, His Work and Word.

Laugh and have some fun. (That works in the Church, too.)

*"God loves a cheerful giver"* (I Corinthians 9:7).

Exchange me for us and us for them.

Sing together.

The world is desperate for joy so the harvest is ripe for us. Truth and joy come together because both are gifts! *"The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad"* (Psalm 126:3). **Thanks for your prayers and financial support of our common work!**

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss  
President  
LCMS Northern Illinois District



# Convention NEWS



**What JOY! we have** as we anticipate the 60th Convention of the LCMS Northern Illinois District!

The LCMS Northern Illinois District Convention affords an opportunity for worship, nurture, inspiration, fellowship, and the communication of vital information as it relates to our District and Synod. It is a wonderful blessing that our Lord works through us in our community of faith.

The convention convenes Friday and Saturday, March 11 and 12, 2022, at Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Illinois. There, delegates from over 200 of our congregations, church workers, lay leaders, and representatives from our partners in ministry will all gather together.

The triennial convention was to be held in 2021, but due to COVID restrictions it was delayed until 2022 so as to enable the in person gathering. Nominations for President, Vice President, Circuit Visitors, NID Secretary, Board of Directors, Concordia University Chicago Board of Regents, and NID Nominations Committee have already been submitted. Voting delegate submissions for pastoral and lay delegates have been requested from each congregation, and overtures have been received for our work together in Advancing His Kingdom.

## Our Convention Statement:

The Church at her best is richly and fully in the Word of God. There is a union between the Word, Centered in Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Our life together, life with God and place in the community is formed by Christ's Word. No wonder the Lord wants His Word to "dwell in us richly." Martin Luther said, *"The Scripture is all Christ."*

What does it look like when the word of Christ dwells in you richly? Grace produces gratitude. Then comes generosity. What you've received, you share. You have an open posture toward others. God's words surround and clothe you. You look more like Christ in that you share with others compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love.

**What Joy! we share** in the Good News that Jesus Christ is alive and well and working through His Church to redeem and restore all that is lost and broken in His world. He does all of the hard work, but we get to be part of it!

# Joy in Discovering DIFFERENCES

Learning about others and experiencing new things can open a student's mind to wonder, discovery, shared faith, and joy. A partnership between the LCMS Northern Illinois District and CLEF (Chicagoland Lutheran Educational Foundation) leads students to experience that joy throughout the year.

The partnership, called Stirred to Love, takes its title from Hebrews 10:24, *"and let us consider how to stir up one another to love."* The program brings together teachers and students from urban and suburban NID schools so that students can make new friends and glimpse lives different from their own.

*"The whole idea is for students from pre-K to high school to partner in a meaningful way,"* said Janet Klotz, who has been executive director of CLEF for nine years and sat on the board for three years before that.

The things learned can be as simple as an urban child discovering and being amazed by how many stars are in the sky at Walcamp, to a suburban child realizing how street-smart urban children are.

Lois Stewart, NID Mission Facilitator for Schools, has come up with many ideas for the program. Ideas include a book club where students read together or read to younger children, Christmas and spring parties, field trips, pen pal and card sharing, and school spirit activities during National Lutheran Schools Week.

*"Some of the schools have done movie nights,"* said Klotz. *"Also, on one field trip, two of the sister schools visited Concordia University where they took a tour and had lunch together. We really want the kids to know that the University is here and all it has to offer."*

Donna Laughlin, Principal of Immanuel Lutheran School in Batavia, explained that COVID has had an impact on the program. Still, last year the pastors of Immanuel and their sister school were able to lead chapel at each other's churches, and Laughlin will be leading chapel at St. John's in November.

*"In addition, last year, the two schools did a food drive together for the food pantry at Concordia University,"* said Laughlin. *"This year we hope to do a service project together at Feed My Starving Children, and we plan to attend each other's spring musicals. We're hoping to play some non-conference basketball games against each other, bowl at St. John's bowling alley, and compete together in a Knowledge Bowl hosted by Immanuel."*

The following is a list of the schools paired together for the 2021-2022 year:

1. Christ the King Chicago, St. Peter Schaumburg and St. John's Lombard
2. Good Shepherd Christian Academy Chicago and Immanuel Dundee
3. St. Paul Austin and Trinity Roselle
4. St. Philip Chicago and St. Peter Arlington Heights
5. St. Paul Dorchester and Immanuel Palatine
6. St. John's Chicago and Immanuel Batavia
7. Grace Christian Academy Chicago and Immanuel Crystal Lake
8. Bethesda International Academy Chicago and St. Paul Mt. Prospect
9. Walther Christian Academy Melrose Park and Immanuel Elmhurst



# Ethnic Ministry GATHERING



Ethnic ministry means the privilege and joy of our participating in what Jesus is already doing to usher in His Kingdom: Christ's commission is to *"make disciples of all nations"* (Matt 28:19). The word nation here is where we get the word ethnic.

On September 25, 2021, church workers and laity from around the LCMS Northern Illinois District gathered at Concordia University Chicago to participate in Christ's commission. They were able to hear and be inspired on the work that lay ahead for us from Rev. Dr. Leo Sanchez, Rev. Dr. Yared Halche, and Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray.

There is most certainly the need to joyfully participate in local communities. The participants were able to see the conversations with people of all backgrounds and contexts as valuable and necessary for ministry and leading with Grace and Gospel.

We intentionally work toward the realization of God's desire that *"all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). We receive Joy! in the knowledge that the Gospel is being shared with all of our neighbors.



# Joy in God's People Studying Together- INCARNATE COMMUNITY

The LCMS Northern Illinois District is developing a Bible Study, Incarnate Community, designed for the whole District that will begin in February. The study is designed to invite congregants to return to an 'in person' community of faith by exploring the God-given blessings that come as the followers of Jesus gather around His Word and Sacraments.

Pastor Hoffman of St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Park Ridge is writing the sermon notes for the third week of the study. The sermon will be based upon the Parable of the Good Samaritan and is titled, "The Beautiful Mess of Ministry."

*"I am excited about the story-based sermon texts because they lend themselves to conversations and are easy to relate to all age groups and demographics within our churches,"* said Hoffman. *"There is joy in brining God's people together in ministry."*

*"I love the word 'Incarnational,'"* continued Hoffman. *"It's at the heart of Jesus' ministry. Jesus wanted to be with the people He served and interact face-to-face. We all learned to do some aspects of ministry remotely during the heaviest days of the pandemic. Now, we are blessed to have those tools in our toolboxes, but we also learned that nothing can truly replace sitting in the same room and worshipping with our family in Christ."*

Voice of Care believes that God creates all people in His image and all people are intrinsically valued by God. Because of this belief, they are committed to building congregations of belonging in which every person is equally valued and respected and has the opportunity to contribute gifts to strengthening the Christian Church. In fact, Voice of Care believes that a congregation is not whole unless every person

has a place to fully belong. This core belief inspires Voice of Care to partner with churches, organizations, and stakeholders to serve people who live with and experience disabilities to advance the Kingdom of God by making disciples. The Good News of Jesus Christ and the redemption He offers is for everyone. With that commitment, Voice of Care has provided us with a leader's guide for the Bible study which is meant to be used with participants who think and operate on a more concrete level of understanding. They may be young, have intellectual disabilities, and perhaps nonverbal in their communication skills. Concrete learners like to learn through their physical senses, what they can touch, see, hear, taste, and smell. They like to deal with things that exist in the physical world. Abstract learners prefer the world of ideas and feelings. They use reason and intuition to deal with ideas, concepts, and feelings.

The four-session Incarnate Community Bible Study is available as a free downloadable resource on our website at [nidlcms.org/incarnate-community-bible-study](http://nidlcms.org/incarnate-community-bible-study). While the study materials are designed for groups, they can also be used as a self-study resource.



## Education MINISTRY UPDATE

### 'Joy in our littlest learners'

God has blessed our schools (both freestanding preschools and elementary schools) with the littlest learners in the Northern Illinois District.

We read these words in Matthew 19:14: "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" What profound words as we have the blessing to share Jesus with the young learners that are in our schools.

The littlest learners bring such joy and love to be in school. Their energy and desire to learn new things gets nurtured each day. The groundwork is set for their future all with Jesus and faith as the foundation.

If you have never visited a preschool classroom, I encourage you to do so and see for yourself the love and joy.







## Bringing It For Belize JOYFUL UPDATE

Although the reporting process is not yet complete, already nine individuals and four groups have reported over 9,100 minutes of exercise and have raised nearly \$1,000 for ministry in Belize. There are also groups and individuals who did not formally register for *Bringing It For Belize* but who participated. We celebrate our participants' commitment to wellness, both in our District and in Belize! This first-time event showed that exercise comes in many forms: steps during a rummage sale, golfing, swimming, lifting weights, walking, mowing the lawn, and numerous other types! This was a fun way to include people from all over the District in a common goal, regardless of age and geography.



Staff from the District office put in their steps during a break from their meeting at Walcamp.



Line dancers at Resurrection, Chicago, were mov'n and groov'n



St. Luke Lutheran School, Itasca, joined the MOVEment!



Children at St. Matthew Lutheran School, Hawthorn Woods, are ready to go.

## Congregational Chairs: JOY!

At Immanuel Crystal Lake, being chairman is both a humbling and joyful experience. As chairman, I am more aware of how our members utilize their God-given talents across our ministries. It is a pleasure to watch our members develop a stronger bond with Christ and each other.

In addition, it's an honor to partner with the other board members. They have been amazing Christian examples and regularly are joy-filled examples.

It is also a privilege to work with Pastor Larry Tieman. Pastor Tieman humbly focuses on sharing the Gospel and models Christian behavior.

*Nick Gottschalk, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Crystal Lake*

Over 100 years ago, my great grandfather, along with other area pastors, started our church and school. He became our first pastor. In turn, my grandparents and my parents were faithful role models as they served at Trinity in various leadership and ministry roles. I feel great joy in looking back and realizing the ways the Lord has guided me to this place and time, to serve in this way. I pray that I can fulfill His purpose for me and joyfully serve to His glory. As my life verse says in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord ..."*

*Brenda Connolly, Trinity Lutheran Church, Roselle*

For me, the greatest joy I find in serving as the chair at St. Paul is seeing the congregation gathering together as the body of Christ. Whether it's for fellowship, fundraising, service events, or school events, I have always loved watching the passion and excitement that flows from this congregation. As chair, I get to see people coming together to accomplish so much for the glory of God.

*Michael Holzkopf, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mount Prospect*

While serving as the president of Faith Lutheran Church in Lake Forest, I have indeed experienced joy. The joy is not set in the context of blessings or achievements, for which we have had our share and are thankful for, but rather from the continued opportunities to serve Christ faithfully despite the turmoil and chaos in the world in recent times. I am reminded that we need to serve as light, a beacon to the world; and in doing so what better way to show this than to emanate joy from our hearts.

*Jeff Change, Faith Lutheran Church, Lake Forest*

Being in a pastoral vacancy and receiving news yesterday that our secretary is resigning, it is easy to miss feeling joy; but there is joy here at Zion. First, we are blessed to have Rev. Harvey Nicholson as a member. He agreed to serve as our vacancy pastor and, from his first day, reminds us "God already knows who our next pastor will be." When you know the end will be good, the getting there becomes easier.

So many members have offered to help where they can and, most of all, they pray. What power those prayers have had! Led by Pam Grosso, our call committee has come together with servant hearts. They are answering difficult questions and giving direction to our search for a new pastor. When one of us tires or becomes frustrated, there are two or three to pick us up.

We are shifting from a mindset of maintaining the status quo to one of preparing ourselves and Zion to be a true home for a new pastor and his family. Trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us at every step, we are living our faith. Walking in Christ with fellow believers, there is no greater joy than this.

*Steve Baker, Zion Lutheran Church, Chebanse*



LCMS Northern Illinois District  
2301 South Wolf Road  
Hillside, IL 60162

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**Joy** is a term that appears many times in many translations of the Bible; but what does joy really mean? In this issue of the Ministry Update, we bring to light the joy we see as members of the LCMS Northern Illinois District.

Joy is a state of being, which differs from happiness. Joy is lasting. Happiness may come and go. The teaching of Luther and the reformers can be summarized in three phrases: Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone. We find joy in these three phrases!

The Holy Spirit has given us full and abiding joy. We have joy because of the grace of Jesus Christ that lives in us. God is always near. We can joyfully focus on our Savior and who He is in our life. We can hold onto joy, we can feel joyful, and we can rejoice with praise no matter what our circumstances may be and no matter what is going on in our lives. And, no matter how down we are, there is always joy to be found in the Lord, and Scripture is filled with examples of joy.

**So, let us go forward with Joy!**

We asked Congregational Chairpersons from around the District to share with the Joy! they have in serving their congregations. You will find their responses as diverse as their ministries.



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LCMS Northern Illinois District  
2301 S. Wolf Road  
Hillside, IL 60162

708-449-3020  
office@nidlcms.org

nidlcms.org  
nidnews.org

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upon request.



**OUR MISSION:**

*Filled with living hope in Christ, Confessing, Praising, and Advancing His Kingdom*

As LCMS Lutherans in Northern Illinois, we will carry out this mission by upholding three pillars. These pillars direct our work together in the vision laid out for us.

- **WORD:** Helping congregations be more centered on a rich life of Word and Sacrament, with congregational support in transitions as well as time of joys and sorrows.
- **WELLNESS:** Promoting and encouraging health and vitality in congregations, schools, ministries, professional workers and lay-leaders.
- **WITNESS:** Encouraging personal witnessing, congregational engagement with their community, support of our NID partnerships and missions and sharing in a world mission field together.