



Northern Illinois District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

President's Commentary

Thirty-five years! That was the milestone Marie and I celebrated this summer. June marked 35 years of marriage and we were, in fact, married in Northern Illinois. This summer we celebrated with a cruise ... on Lake Geneva ... Wisconsin, not Switzerland ... with our children and a significant other.

It is important to look back on such occasions for we see the mercy and faithfulness of God for us sinners. What milestones have you celebrated lately in your congregation, community, family, or even your birthday?

Every journey has highs and lows. We look back and we look forward and because of God's promises in Christ, the best is yet to come! **And remember the rear-view mirror is smaller than the windshield!**

In the Northern Illinois District (NID), we look back in this issue of our *Ministry Update*.

- On hundreds of occasions church workers have been assisted by our Church Worker Care Team.
- Twenty-two students from Northern Illinois congregations preparing for full-time church work have been assisted by "Workers of the Word" and other NID scholarship funds with support of nearly \$40,000.
- Over \$160,000 has been given in grants to congregations, schools, and agencies actively involved in mission and ministry.
- The "Hearts for Jesus" program from Northern Illinois District schools has raised nearly \$20,000 to support a feeding program and the Mercy House in Belize as the Gospel is shared in Word, Sacrament, and Deed.
- Our first NID short-term mission trip from several NID congregations occurred earlier this year with more to come.
- Nearly 60 lay leaders and pastors gathered for Circuit Partnership Gatherings in recent months to connect and see possibilities for work together. The recent merger of three congregations in Beecher was a result of earlier meetings. Right now, Peace Lutheran Church, Beecher with two sites is a reality as of a May 21, 2023 worship service and signing of the LCMS Constitution.



Northern Illinois District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

- Planning, conversations, and partnerships are emerging in Chicago including new Hispanic work and a new Urban Ministry Vicarage at Tabor Lutheran Church. St. James Lutheran Church, Chicago is assisting our historic First Bethlehem Lutheran Church with pastoral care as new possibilities are discussed.
- Seventeen new pastors and families are being encouraged and supported through our PALS (Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support) program for their first three years of service under the leadership of Pastor Leonard Payton and his wife Lori. We have one of the largest and most dynamic PALS programs in the LCMS.
- In the words of more than a few pastors, we hosted “one of the best” Spring Pastor Conferences on the topic of preaching this May. There was time for fellowship, and the program was to assist pastors in the sacred work of preaching stronger with more application of the Word.
- Hundreds of visits are made by the NID Ministry Staff (many done with little notice) to congregations and schools in a time of crisis or transition and to celebrate. We are Stronger Together!

This is a quick look back! By the grace of God, we look forward confident that the Lord is at work and will be at work in the future!

Looking ahead:

- Commissioned Worker Conference in October at Concordia University Chicago.
- A requested “Lay Leadership Summit” to enrich the lay leaders of NID congregations with ideas, skills, and partnerships as well as resources needed to grow, encourage, and raise up new leaders for service.

We rejoice in the saving work of Jesus, and we give thanks for your confession, “*Jesus is Lord*,” and the rich life in the congregations of Northern Illinois empowered by the Gospel given in Word and Sacrament! These are challenging and exiting days to serve and work TOGETHER! We are stronger together in Christ!

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss

President, LCMS Northern Illinois District