

President's Commentary Special Edition Spring 2025

Dear Redeemed Friends,

“Don't ask others to do what you are not doing or willing to do.”

So, in spring of 2024, the LCMS Northern Illinois District (NID) staff headed to Tabor Lutheran in Chicago for a Shine! project. Shine! is all about connecting congregations, ministries, and fellow Christians to help and serve in the name of Jesus to bear witness to Jesus as Savior.

That day, we also went to the local public school for some hours of service. Amazingly, as we met with the principal, one of the first things out of her mouth was, **“We love our Lutheran pastors!”** I do not know if she is a believer in Christ, but the Lutheran pastors and local congregation had built a meaningful relationship. Well done!

This year, we headed to Christ the King Lutheran Church and School on the near south side of Chicago to serve again. This time, we also had the opportunity to recognize the 50+ years of service of Rev. John and Geri Brazeal in this urban setting. What dedication and long-term impact of these two servants of Christ! We are **“Stronger Together: Co-Workers for the Kingdom of God!”**

What's ahead??

- The NID Board of Directors will consider a proposal for the NID to work with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) on a **Chicagoland Clarity Process**. This will lead to a strategic direction for congregations, schools, ministries, and future missions in Chicago and the near suburbs. Many of our urban congregations struggle with numbers, some with viability, and even others in simply having a pastor to serve them for worship. In some places, there are large buildings with just a few dear people who love the Lord and the Church. Several places have empty and unused school buildings. Called workers and lay leaders are concerned, but often disconnected from each other, and some are very disheartened! **Thinking and praying through a plan will take wisdom, discernment, Kingdom-mindedness, and humility.**
- The NID is again planning a **Lay Leadership Summit** to bring together lay leaders and interested called workers for information, ideas, encouragement, and best practices from those who are serving on the front lines, as well as those who see trends in what church life looks like in 2025 and beyond. The workshop sessions at the Lay Leadership Summit apply our biblical and Lutheran theology to your setting. The date for this year's Lay Leadership Summit is August 23, 2025 at Walther Christian Academy. Registration begins in June 2025. You will return with practical



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ideas. One comment from last year's Summit was, "It's good to know we are not facing this alone."

- We will continue to connect to each other through the Circuit Partnership Gatherings. Lay leaders with a wide variety of responsibilities in the local congregation, as well as pastors serving those ministries, need time together to connect, listen, encourage, and plan, because we are **Stronger Together**. These meetings make a difference. If invited, please attend.
- Did you know that the NID has its own summer mission trip to Belize and that **our numbers have doubled?** Congregations come together to serve together in the village of Seine Bight, Belize, which is connected with LCMS missions. Additionally, if you were at the NID convention, you were blessed to hear Bishop Torkild Masvie from the Lutheran Church in Norway and Iceland. They are planting many new missions in Norway, Iceland, and possibly in Greenland. Bishop Masvie has deep roots among us in the NID, and he views us as a place of encouragement and respite. **We want these two relationships to flourish!** Strong congregations and ministries are Christ-centered and mission focused...near and far!

Much is beyond our control, but not beyond our Lord. We remain faithful, prayerful, vigilant, and active. "Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for your labor in the Lord is never in vain." (I Corinthians 15:58) Christ is risen, He lives and reigns, and He has chosen you and us!

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss

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