



MEHLS awarded \$50,000 grant from TheBANK of Edwardsville

Metro-East Lutheran High School, Edwardsville, is pleased to announce that the Board of Directors from TheBANK of Edwardsville has awarded Metro-East Lutheran High School a three-year \$50,000 grant toward its "Building on the One Foundation" capital campaign.

"As the principal of Metro-East Lutheran High School, we are extremely grateful to TheBANK of Edwardsville for their financial commitment to our capital campaign, and to Christian education in

our community," commented Dan Kostencki. "TheBANK of Edwardsville continues to exhibit their total dedication to their community. Our thanks go out to Mr. Tom Holloway, president and CEO, the Board of Directors, and the whole family of TheBANK of Edwardsville."

The "Building on the One Foundation" capital campaign calls for raising \$10 million for high-priority construction of additional classrooms, a multi-purpose fine arts center, renovations and the construction of additional athletic facilities, as well as the renovation of existing buildings and facilities.



Brittany Nicole Kleiboeker was baptized at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Ferrin, by Pastor Scott Niermann on April 4. Brittany's sponsors are Ron and Lynn Michael.



Pictured are, from left, Rich Watson, senior vice president/chief operations executive, TheBANK of Edwardsville; Dan Kostencki, principal, Metro-East Lutheran High School; Roger Ernst, chairman of the Board, Metro-East Lutheran High School; and Bill Alexander, executive vice president, TheBANK of Edwardsville.

Carillon recital series

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, will host its carillon recital series from 7 to 8 p.m. on June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. Guests are invited to bring lawn chairs, blankets, and picnics to enjoy in the main quad. Concordia Seminary is located at 801 Seminary Place in Clayton. For information, call 314-505-7374 or e-mail communications@csl.edu.

EDITOR

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NEWS

Calls and vicarages issued at LCMS seminaries

On April 22, calls to serve as pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were issued to 122 students at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, during a worship service in The Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus.

In a separate service held earlier that day, 98 students received assignments to serve as vicars, and two students have assignments pending. Vicarage is a one-year internship that students preparing to serve in the pastoral ministry

must complete.

Concordia Seminary also celebrated the presentation of seven deaconess students who were assigned internships, and four deaconess candidates who were assigned calls.

The Southern Illinois District received the following new pastors and vicars from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne:

Pastors

Scott Busacker (St. Louis)—pastor, Trinity, Harvel.

Arthur Eichhorn (St. Louis)—pastor, St. Salvator/St. Peter, Venedy/

New Memphis.

Russell Johnson (Fort Wayne)—Trinity, Nashville.

Vicars

Samuel Beltz (St. Louis)—Zion, Staunton.

Derek Evans (St. Louis)—Signal Hill, Belleville.

Hayes, Joshua (St. Louis)—Our Savior, Carbondale.

G. Robert Heimgartner (Fort Wayne)—St. John, Chester.

Dennis Kootz (St. Louis)—Emmaus, Dorsey.

Jared Nies (St. Louis)—Zion, Litchfield.

John Shank (Fort Wayne)—Trinity, Edwardsville.

Matthew Tassej (Fort Wayne)—Our Redeemer, Golconda.

Calls in the district

Calls Extended

Scott Busacker, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to Trinity, Harvel (pastor).

Arthur Eichhorn, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to St. Salvator/St. Peter, Venedy/New Memphis (pastor).

Russell Johnson, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., to Trinity, Nashville (pastor/principal).

Call Accepted

Nathan Meador, Zion, Staunton, to St. John, Plymouth, Wis.



During Call Day services on April 22, at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 122 pastoral calls, 98 vicarages, and four deaconess assignments for students were announced. Those assigned in the Southern Illinois District, pictured with their wives and the district president, are, from left, front row, Jared Nies, Cassie Beltz, Becky Evans, Diane Hayes, Megan Busacker, Faith Mueller, Rev. Herbert Mueller; second row, Dennis Kootz, Samuel Beltz, Derek Evans, Joshua Hayes, Scott Busacker, and Arthur Eichhorn.



This common life
by **Herbert C. Mueller**

Recently, I heard about an African and an American talking together about why a woman might choose to have an abortion. The American described the idea that a woman should have control over her own body and should be free to decide whether or not to carry the child to term.

The African was shocked by this and asked, "How can she do this? That baby is not hers!" Now it was the American's turn to be amazed. "What do you mean, the baby is not hers?" "The baby belongs to the community," the African replied, "not just to her alone. She cannot destroy that life. It's not hers to take, but it belongs to all of us."

We Americans often think we are completely independent of others, making our own decisions with no regard to anyone else. Abortion is simply an example of this selfishness in the extreme.

Africans may have other problems, but often they do have a much greater sense of community, of receiving life in common with others.



Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.
District President

What do we hold in common? The Scripture testifies of the early Christian community that "the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). This holding of everything in common was a response to their most important common possession.

Earlier, the Scripture explained that those who were baptized on Pentecost "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The word "fellowship" here refers to what they held in common—fellowship rooted in the Word of God, the common meal (Holy Communion)—and in worship. Here, we believe, is where God gives life.

The Word of God always brings Jesus and, as John writes, brings the believer into fellowship with Jesus. "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). St. Paul says the same thing: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

Our fellowship is with Jesus Christ Himself! But what do we have in common with Him? What do we share with Him?

Actually, what is most important is that He receives what is ours.

In Jesus, the eternal Son of God received our human flesh. He walked this same earth with us. He was born a full human being, human even from the very beginning—His conception as a child in His mother.

That's one of the reasons why we Lutherans oppose abortion and work to help those in that desperate situation—even the child in the womb is someone with whom Jesus shares life in common, since Jesus has come for every human being!

In fact, Jesus wants to have fellowship with everyone who is human. But, if to have fellowship is to share things in common, what do we have that is fully ours to share with Jesus? Only our sin and our death. Yet, incredibly, that is exactly why Jesus has come! He knows completely our weaknesses and, "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

He receives our death, but in return gives us His life. What a deal! When Jesus shares everything in common with us, it means death for Him. But in His resurrection, we receive together in common His life. That's also part of the picture when He gives us His body and blood united with the bread and wine of His Supper. We are connected through Jesus Christ to one another. We have a common life we have all received from Jesus.

Because we belong to Jesus, we also belong to one another. "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20), the Scripture says.

How far does that extend? Ultimately, it includes the whole human family. That life, even in the womb, is not yours to give or take. It

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Lutheran schools —the next generation

by Roger Sprengel

If Lutheran schools suddenly disappeared, what would we do to assure that the next generation would be raised in the knowledge of God? What would we do to help families cope with the challenges of rearing children in a world that is often devoid of spiritual direction? To whom would we turn to develop church leaders who will direct and guide this generation and subsequent generations on the path that leads to salvation through Jesus Christ?

Reshaping the Future

Not only are we held accountable for providing necessary resources to operate our Lutheran schools day to day and week to week for the current school year, but we are charged by our congregations and leaders to look to the future with the vision necessary to



**Roger Sprengel
Schools and Executive
Assistant**

continuing this ministry for the next generation! While some of these ideas may be uncomfortable or threatening, we must respond with passion and conviction for those yet to be educated and trained in the faith!

1. Third-Source Funding—It is already apparent that student tuition and congregational assessment are NOT enough to provide for the future of our schools! Schools and congregational leaders must put

into place a development program supported by endowments from members and supporters of our churches, schools, and friends of Christian education. The cost of educating an elementary student in 2009 exceeds \$5,000 per student! What will the cost be in five years? In 10 years?

Do you want to know more about setting up such a program for your church or school? Contact Kirk Mueller, the Southern Illinois gift planning counselor with LCMS Foundation. His contact information is kirk.mueller@lfnf.org or call 314-741-3700. Talk with your family, financial planner, and lawyer to arrange to provide future resources for your family and to help with future ministry needs of the church!

2. Marketing and Recruitment—In today's society and culture, we must be intentional and repeat the story of Lutheran education over and over. I'm talking about future students for our Lutheran schools as well as future church workers to fill the professional personnel positions of pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, and the like. This means creating a positive image of the school, publicizing in the community positive results and accomplishments, hosting public

open houses and other events, and generally being proactive in recruiting families and students. We also must help our universities and seminaries recruit and support our future prospective workers in the church. Current pastors and teachers can access curricular materials written for Lutheran schools, Sunday schools, and youth at www.WhatWay.org.

3. Competition—While Lutheran schools are not "competing" against other local public or private schools, we are placed in this position by the mere fact that families have choices or priorities regarding enrollment and other issues. For most of us in Lutheran schools, we teach Christ crucified and can offer the "added value" of professing our faith through the application of Law and Gospel. (What is the value of a Christian education? Priceless!)

We do face issues in our schools regarding declining enrollment, adequate facilities, transportation, providing for special needs, and the like. Wise and prudent decisions must be made to provide answers for the continuation of our schools and programs. Can we survive with 10 students in a classroom, or do we need to consider consolidation

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THIS COMMON LIFE

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comes from the Father through the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit. All are redeemed, for "Christ died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15).

This is the life we have in common. Yes, so many who they are don't know it or they reject it. But you? You have it, in Jesus. You believe it? It's yours. Now, go tell someone! God be with you, always!



Sail to new heights

The Accelerated Reader program at Trinity, Hoyleton, has taken on a nautical theme. The students have been earning rank as sailors while they read books and earn points by taking quizzes on the computer.

To date, 25 students have made the rank of First Mate. To achieve this, students must earn 25 points. Ten students earned 50 points for Lieutenant, four students earned 75 points for Commander, and three students have earned 100 points to make Captain.

Two students have made Rear Admiral with 150 points, and one has risen to Admiral with 250 points.

Midwest pastors, wives invited to recharge with 'Grace' in August

Just added to the Grace Place Lutheran Retreats summer schedule is an opportunity for pastoral couples from LCMS Midwest districts to recharge and grow in faith, Aug. 3-7, at Trout Lodge, Potosi, Mo. This affordable minisabbatical shares biblically based strategies to enhance ministry and personal life.

Educational sessions offer strategies on how to cope with ministry challenges and enhance physical, emotional, and spiri-



These students are in the Accelerated Reader program at Trinity, Hoyleton.

tual health. Topics include strengthening relationships and fiscal health. Private consultations are available. The Grace Place day includes time to be in the Word and recreation opportunities such as hiking, golfing, and even napping.

Cost for the four-night retreat is \$345 per couple, which includes lodging, meals, education sessions and materials, and recreation. Generous donors and foundations help underwrite actual retreat expenses, which run about \$2,000 per couple. Registration deadline is July 1.

Since 1999, Grace Place has served some 2,500 church workers and spouses at more than 100 retreats. A Recognized Service Organization, Grace Place was founded

by a lifelong Lutheran and physician after years of treating church workers and seeing how ministry struggles lead to health problems.

The Midwest pastors' retreat is offered in conjunction with a retreat for Lutheran missionaries home on furlough. For more information, visit www.graceplaceretreats.org or call 314-842-3077. To learn how you can help support Grace Place retreats for church workers, contact Grace Place Chief Development Officer John Diefenbach at jdief@graceplaceretreats.org.



LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

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with a neighboring school? Can we maintain the current 80-year-old facility, or is it time to make plans for a new physical plant? Can we offer additional programming, such as before- and after-school care or pre-kindergarten classes, to provide needed services? Is there a program, service, or "niche" that our school has or could offer in a Christian setting that other area schools do not?

I pray that our local, district, and national leaders will continue to fervently seek solutions to these questions and many others as we move forward in ministry with God's help and guidance!

New church plant confirms new members

The Saline County church plant, sponsored by Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Golconda, Ill., confirmed four adults on Palm Sunday, April 5.

After initial canvassing in August and September 2008 conducted by members of Our Redeemer, as well as volunteers from Ongoing Ambassadors For Christ (O AFC), a home-based Bible class started regular meetings in mid-September at the Harrisburg home of Vicar Terry O'Brien.

On Nov. 16, the church plant was declared a "preaching station" of the Southern Illinois District, and the first weekly Sunday worship service was held at rental space in Eldorado. Weekly attendance now averages eight to 10 worshippers.

Members of O AFC again canvassed Saline County on the weekend of April 24-26, encouraging residents of Eldorado and Harrisburg to attend a worship service at the church plant and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2008 church giving survey results

In late 2008 and early 2009, there was a growing number of media articles and news stories about a decline in church giving in light of the growing reces-



The first adult confirmation class for the LCMS Saline County church plant, which meets in Eldorado, Ill., included, from left, Our Redeemer Pastor E. James Rivett, Kristen Bergfeld, Teresa Beltz, Andres Beltz, Bette Wuornos, and Vicar Terry O'Brien.

sion in America. Church giving stories were in city newspapers, primetime television news stories, national magazines, and even on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Many of the news stories tended to be anecdotal, with a national or local reporter calling a few pastors to find out what was happening in their local church concerning giving. Very few of the stories referenced any national research or solid data to substantiate what was really happening in churches across America.

Dr. Brian Kluth, a pastor (not Lutheran), an author, national and international speaker, radio speaker for

www.GiveWithJoy.org, decided to do a survey. He sent out e-mails inviting people to take the surveys during the month of February. A total of 1,016 completed the survey. All the collected numerical data for this survey is available at www.kluth.org/surveyresults.htm. Here are some of the results of the survey.

Geographical Demographics—Churches from all U.S. regions/states took the survey, plus churches from more than 30 foreign countries.

Theological Distinctives—Churches from all the following theological groups were represented: Mainline, Evangelical,

Baptist, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Independent/Nondenominational/Community, Catholic, and Orthodox.

Church Size—20 percent, under 100 in weekend attendance; 30 percent had 100 to 249 in weekend attendance; 29 percent had 250 to 1,000 in weekend attendance; and 13 percent had more than 1,000 in weekend attendance.

Report of 2008 Giving

1. Out of the 1,016 churches that responded to the survey, 29 percent said giving was down in 2008, 24 percent said giving was flat in 2008, and 47 percent said giving was
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(Continued from Page F.) up in 2008. While it is important to note that nearly 30 percent of churches experienced a decline in giving in 2008, the unexpected news in this survey was that 47 percent of churches saw an increase in giving this past year.

2. Megachurches: There were comments in church leadership circles that megachurches were going to be negatively impacted the most in this down economy. This observation did not hold true since 47 percent of churches with more than 2,000 in weekend attendance experienced an increase in giving. We currently have no megachurches in the LCMS Southern Illinois District.

3. Small churches: The smallest churches (under 100 people in weekend attendance) were most impacted by the economy, with 37 percent of the churches reporting that giving was down and 38 percent reporting that giving was up.

4. Geographical implications: Many people felt the Midwest states of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin would be the most negatively impacted region of the country in church giving because of the recession. But, again, the regional averages were very close to the national

average—30 percent said giving was down and 42 percent said giving was up. The hardest-hit area of the country was in the Pacific states (California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii), where giving in 34 percent of churches had gone down and 33 percent had gone up. Southwest states saw the biggest gains, with 58 percent of churches indicating that giving went up.

5. Comment: While some non-profits across America are beginning to experience a downturn in giving, many people make giving to church their most important priority. For many people of faith, giving has more to do with their spiritual convictions than economic choices.

Dr. Kluth said that churches are stepping up to help people in need and to give people helpful biblical insights so they can learn to better manage their finances.

Consecrated Stewards

Where can you find help in the area of financial stewardship? The Lutheran Church Extension Fund offers a valuable resource called Consecrated Stewards. Consecrated Stewards provides Bible studies and other resources to help congregations

address the financial issue. Consecrated Stewards focuses on the need of the giver to give. The question is not just “How much money does my church need?” but “What percentage is God calling me to give of what He has entrusted to me?”

Consecrated Stewards is not tied to the church budget and can be used at any time of the year. Consecrated Stewards is based on the biblical principles of percentage-based, grace-motivated, sacrificial giving. It urges people to take a step forward in their stewardship life without pressure or legalism. It does not use gimmicks or fundraising techniques. It emphasizes equal sacrifice, not equal amounts.

Consecrated Stewards ties the commitment process to the Sunday morning act of worship. It reaches the maximum number of people in the most spiritual setting. It does not have members asking other members one-on-one for a financial commitment.

Consecrated Stewards requires minimal organizations:

- Four weeks of preparation and four weeks of emphasis.
- Ideally a working committee of eight.
- Usually only four committee meetings plus

attention to ongoing stewardship.

Consecrated Stewards uses a trained guest leader to keep the process on track, maintain biblical focus, and avoid expensive shortcuts. The guest leader works with your working committee, delivers a special stewardship Bible class for the entire congregation, gives direction to your members in filling out the response card, and preaches on Consecration Sunday.

Additional information about Consecrated Stewards can be obtained by calling Dan Roth, 618-234-4767, at the Southern Illinois District office, 2408 Lebanon Ave., Belleville, IL 62221.

Send in your news

The *Southern Illinois District Edition of The Lutheran Witness* is designed for you—the pastor, teacher, layperson.

Send news about your congregation, school, or an individual's achievements to Lois Engfehr, 2408 Lebanon Ave., Belleville, IL 62221; or e-mail at sidlw@earthlink.net. Photos must be 300 dpi and e-mailed separately.

CHURCH/PEOPLE

Church/people news in Southern Illinois

The **St. John, Chester**, boys basketball team competed in the Lutheran State Basketball Tournament in Chicago in March. This invitational is for the top 16 Lutheran school teams in Illinois. Admission is based on team records and tournament wins.

St. John's Hornets beat Chicago (Pilgrim), lost to Bloomington (Trinity), then defeated Lombard (St. John), and Wheaton (St. John) for the fifth-place trophy. **Dalton Misuraca** and **Caleb Arbeiter** were named to the All-Tournament Team.

The Hornets ended their season with a record of 24 and 3. To their trophy case they also added first-place trophies from the Okaw Valley Conference, their conference tournament, the All-Lutheran Tournament at



The St. John, Chester, boys basketball team took the fifth-place trophy in the Lutheran State Basketball Tournament in Chicago in March.

St. Mark, Steeleville, and the SUHSAA Region VII Tournament. They also received the second-place hardware at the 16-team All-Lutheran Tournament in Collinsville.

The 2008-09 team members are **Joe Marks, Justin Marks, Brad**

Asselmeier, Austin Redeker, Jacob Lochhead, Hunter Cushman, Jared Johnson, Colin Canady, Christopher Schwartz, Austen Barnhart, Dalton Misuraca, Caleb Arbeiter, Jacob Cowan, and Solomon Mueller. The Hornets are coached by **Steve Schwartz** and **Jake Arbeiter.**

Calendar of events

June

- 3—Pastors Conference Committee Meeting, 9 a.m.
- 4—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 10—Lutheran School Accreditation Commission, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 12-13—Senior High School Youth Gathering, Carlinville

- 16—NLSA Training Meeting, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 20—Board of Missions, 9 a.m.
- 25—Youth Advisory Committee, 6:30 p.m. at Zion, Belleville

July

- 2—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 16—LWML District Board of Directors, 9:30 a.m.
- 25—SID Board of Directors, 9 a.m.

August

- 5-6—Midwest Stewardship Conference, Concordia Seminary
- 6—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 12—Day of Spiritual Renewal, location to be determined
- 24—Board of Spiritual Care and Supervision, 9 a.m.



The 6:30 a.m. Bible study of St. John Lutheran Church, Sparta, gathered in December 2008 for a Bible study party, a Christmas party, and a 95th birthday party for its senior member, Cora Ohms, seated at right, front.