



# DISTRICT NEWS

## MINNESOTA NORTH

### OKTOBERFEST!

On Oct. 6, the smell of sauerkraut was in the air. Lively polka music from an accordionist could be heard above the laughter and clattering of plates. Apple crisp was dished up right and left. This was Oktoberfest night at Zion, Mora.

More than 50 congregation members were involved in organizing, donating, preparing and serving the German meal.

More than 300 people from Mora and surrounding communities came to enjoy the meal and root beer. A side room was filled with items for sale donated by members, who baked, canned, sewed or crafted the items.

Free-will donations were taken and as a result, Zion was able to present the Kanabec County Salvation Army with a check for \$2,000. The Kick Cancer to the Curb chapter was also presented with a check for \$2,000.

A great deal of work went into the event, but a great many smiles made all the efforts worthwhile.



▲ The food line was long during the Oktoberfest in Mora.



◀ Zion's servers looked after their guests.

### Thinking biblically about stewardship

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, hosted a stewardship conference — “More Than Giving” — Nov. 30-Dec. 1.

The conference was co-hosted by the LCMS Office of National Mission and DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel.

Pastors, church administrators, stewardship board members, congregation leaders and other laity gathered and heard Rev. Heath Curtis and Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador equip pastors and laity to think biblically



Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador gives his presentation.

See DOXOLOGY, page 2

## Bringing the Bible into more homes

In the fall of 2018, Rev. Monte Meyer, Minnesota North District Parish Life facilitator, introduced “Bring it Home: Reading the Great Stories of the Bible” to all our congregations.

Working with Concordia Publishing House and subsidized by individual donors and district funds, significant discounts were offered on two story Bibles.

It was a huge success. More

than 75 district congregations purchased almost 3,500 story Bibles. Each week, families across the district are reading five great stories of the Bible.

The district is receiving reports on how members are getting into God’s Word in their homes. Others are sharing the books with their neighbors and friends while inviting them to church. Some pastors are using them in their small groups. Others

are publishing the discussion sheets for their individual members.

Rev. Meyer has been extremely grateful for the response to “Bring it Home.” God is doing powerful work in the district as people gather around God’s Word!

If you would like to be involved or for more information, call Rev. Meyer at the district office, 218-829-1781.



## Telling the Christmas story

The Sunday school students of Trinity, Isle, presented “We Come to Bethlehem” for their annual Christmas program. Messages on the birth of Jesus read by some of the children were interspersed with hymns sung by the participants and the congregation. Attendees held lighted candles in the dimly lit sanctuary during “Silent Night.”

Laura Horsch, Sunday school superintendent, directed the production, with help from Kate Peterson and Miriam Mueller, music director. Joseph and Mary were portrayed by Josh Peterson and Aria Mueller.



From left, (first row) Kenley Kohlgraf, Allie Gallion, Cadence Mueller; (second row) Leila Gallion, Abbie Peterson, Thaddeus Mueller; (third row) Ethan Peterson, Aria Mueller, Abbie Gallion; (fourth row) Lucas Peterson, Josh Peterson and Josiah Mueller.



## Thanksgiving for the community

For the past 22 years, the WINGS kids (the confirmation students) and many adult volunteers of St. John’s, Kroschel (rural Hinckley), have served a community Thanksgiving-eve dinner in support of various mission and aid projects.

More than 140 people were served a traditional Thanksgiving meal. A free-will offering brought in more than \$900 for the LCMS congregations in Panama City, Fla., impacted by Hurricane Michael.

## DOXOLOGY

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about financial stewardship in its broader context.

DOXOLOGY hosts conferences on various topics around the country. The main purpose of DOXOLOGY is accomplished through its Classic Program, in which pastors are encouraged, over the course of three retreats, to reflect

on their own spiritual health.

Pastors are also offered a curriculum carefully crafted to help them review and enhance their professional competencies and skills. All of this is rooted in the care of souls and informed by the insights of contemporary Christian psychology.

Learn more about this program or any of DOXOLOGY’s events at [doxology.us](http://doxology.us).

# The blessing of the VACANCY PASTOR

Most articles found in this part of *The Lutheran Witness* are submitted by members of congregations and organizations that wish to highlight something that the Lord is doing in their settings.

The information presented in this article was requested by the editor to try to highlight a part of how the Lord does His work in our Minnesota North District. When the called pastor is absent from the congregation for a brief time, for vacation, or when a congregations pastoral office is vacant, someone is needed to fill in.

We are blessed with men who help out in these times. Typically, they are men who have retired from full-time ministry or are at the moment without a call.

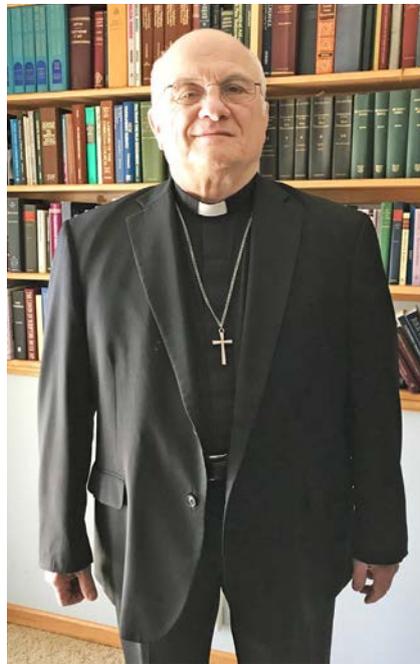
Rev. Don Polege is one of the men who serves the church in this capacity in our district, and has done so since he retired in May 2012.

He has served six churches in times of pastoral vacancy. He has also served in 17 churches by preaching and leading worship (often called pulpit supply) when the called pastor was absent.

What is that like? Polege noted that while each congregation has its own specific traditions and worship spaces, the liturgical order of our churches maintains a similarity among them. Particularly when just filling in for one Sunday, there is a challenge of not really knowing the people that one is trying to minister to. Polege tries to use time before and after service to get to know the people he is with each week.

When called to serve in a vacancy, the situation is different.

“In a vacancy, the pastor has the opportunity to develop a pastoral relationship with the members and determine much better their physical, emotional and



Rev. Don Polege

spiritual needs,” Polege said.

Polege stated that he feels much better able to serve the people the more he gets to know them. However, he knows that the Spirit will do His work right from the beginning. The Scriptures are meant for all people and apply to all equally. Therefore, God’s work is done even when the pastor does not yet know well the lives of the members.

Vacancy pastors typically end up involved in many of the same areas of congregational life that the called pastor would. Polege noted that he personally enjoys getting to preach and teach the faith to all ages and in all settings of pastoral ministry. Serving in this way does mean being gone from one home congregation quite often and can mean always being away from one’s family as well. Polege’s wife remains

very active in their home congregation but does travel at times with him when he is standing in the pulpit.

The church is blessed by men like Polege, who are willing to continue serving and sacrificing time at home and in their congregation to serve our congregations when the called pastor is not present.

Polege shared one particular blessing he had recently when a grieving widow expressed her thanks to him.

“She told me that my sermon had completely changed her outlook on life to a comforting and happy one,” he said. “I told her that I didn’t deserve the credit and that God was speaking to her through my words, assuring her of a joyous reunion in heaven.”

While there are many challenges in doing this type of work, it always has its particular blessings as well. This type of work allows those serving in it to see the true nature of the body of Christ — which extends way beyond congregational lines — more fully than for others who are in the same congregation week after week.

Polege said of those he has been blessed to serve: “They are my brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as I enjoy being with my biological family, I enjoy being with my spiritual family and leading them in worship.”

God’s people should always remain thankful for men like Polege. May God sustain them in their service.

## Send news

If you have any announcements, special events or human interest stories that you or your organization would like published, please send submissions to [the.lutheran.witness@mnlcms.org](mailto:the.lutheran.witness@mnlcms.org).

You may also mail your submissions to Peace Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 60, Finlayson, MN 55735, attn. Rev. Philip Hoppe. Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.

# COUNSELOR'S CORNER

## Boundless Love

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” — Rom. 5:8



Love really is a popular secular theme in February. You send flowers, chocolates and gifts to your loved ones. You take them out for a special meal. People think or feel that their love for their spouse, children, grandchildren or parents is so unfathomable.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as profound as is the love that you have for your loved ones, it is nothing in comparison to the love that God has for you. In the Garden of Eden, our ancestors Adam and Eve sinned and that perfect relationship with God was severed. There would be nothing that you (or anyone) would ever be able to do to repair that relationship because of your sinfulness. So God shows His love for you in that while you were still a sinner, He set in motion a plan to restore, to heal this broken relationship that you and I never could.

In God the Father's plan, He sent His Son from His heavenly throne to become a man. Fully God and fully man. To live a perfect life under the Law and so fulfill all of the Law. The Son willingly takes the sins of the world to that cruel tree that you call the cross. There Jesus, the Christ, was crucified, died and was buried. The wrath that you deserve for your sins is poured out upon Jesus in order that you might be declared righteous, justified from the penalty of your sins. While you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Saints in Christ, Jesus did not stay in the tomb. No, sin and death could not hold Him. He rose from the dead, and 40 days later ascended back to His heavenly throne. This is the love God has for you. He desires that you trust in Him and His promises so you can celebrate the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb (Christ) and His bride (the Church). The peace of Christ be with you all.

**Rev. Donald Klatt**  
Lakeland Region Pastoral Counselor



**The quilting group of Trinity, Carlos**, meets twice a month and produces more than 100 quilts a year. They are donated to Lutheran World Relief, Orphan Grain Train, Red Cross, Salvation Army, fire victims and for various fundraisers. From left, Eleanor Yohnke, Eileen Bachmann, Deb Powers, Norma Steidl, Lois Rediehs, Marlyne Klinder, Clara Hammer and Linda Schackel.

## Thank you



To St. John's, Red Lake Falls, quilters: Thank you for your generous donation of the six handmade quilts to SONshine

Ministries that will be distributed to the poor in Mexico. This is a perfect gift for a Mexican pastor to take to someone who is sick or is asking for some type of help. I know a lot of hard work and love went into these quilts and you can be assured that a lot of love will be given in the distribution of these same quilts. Thank you again.

Dios te bendiga (God bless you) • Keith and Linda Axvig



**The Trinity, Isle, LWML held its Bible study retreat** at Camp Onomia in the summer. The annual event focused on God's Word, with Bible studies led by Connie Strandberg, Jennie Determan, Karen Roeschlein and Laura Determan. Other attendees included Rev. Mark Maunula, Jean Read, Evi Moss, Carol Ann Sander, Laura Frostad, Glenna Zortman, Donna Dobbelaire, Micki Tangen, Maxine Harms, Diane Medema, Debbie Weeda, Sharon Maunula and LeAnn Gregoire.



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