



CONCERNS ABOUT THE PENDING EQUALITY ACT LEGISLATION & STATE HEALTH ED STANDARDS

The Equality Act of 2021, also known as H.R. 5, was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in a 224–206 vote on Feb. 25. The bill is now in the hands of the U.S. Senate. If signed into law, it will have a significant and wide-ranging impact on Christian churches, schools, institutions and individuals.

Among its tenets, H.R. 5 challenges the biblical understanding of God's creation of humans as male and female. The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), has issued a statement sharing pastoral counsel on this bill and its potential consequences for the church.

Harrison writes: "The church's task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). ...

"All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals. ...

"No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. 'And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matt. 28:20)."

[Read the full letter from President Harrison here.](#)

Reprinted, with permission, from the March 2021 *Reporter*, the official newspaper of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. [Original article here.](#)

CONCERNS WITH THE K-12 HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS PROPOSED BY THE NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) recently released [a first draft of K-12 Health Standards](#). These standards are meant to guide curriculum for all Nebraska schools, including public and non-public schools.

The Health Standards are a deeply flawed, ideologically driven document. Should such standards be adopted by schools, children will be placed in peril, many educators will find their professional judgment and conscience under attack, and the culture will move toward a further normalization of child sexualization.

What can you do?

- Pray for Christian teachers and staff serving in our public schools, that they may find opportunities to freely share their faith.
- Double down on your commitment to Christian education for your own family.
- Talk about your concern for the new health education standards with your friends. Make sure that they are aware of the educational standards being proposed for every public school in Nebraska.
- The Nebraska Department of Education is seeking feedback about these standards. Please take some time to fill out [the NDE online survey at this link](#) and speak up for all Nebraska kids!
- Watch for local Health Education Standards.

Learn more and access a bulletin insert for your congregation on our website at: <https://www.ndlcms.org/action-alert/>.

ABOUT US

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News items, congregational anniversaries, and ministry stories for the *Reporter* are always welcome. Please submit items to Kim Myers at reporter@ndlcms.org or by mail. Visit our website at <http://www.ndlcms.org> for more information or to subscribe to the *Reporter* by email.

COVID-19 DOESN'T STOP OUTREACH: CAMPUS MINISTRY DURING AN UNUSUAL YEAR



You might have heard the story about a man whose boat sank while he was sailing on the ocean. Fearing he would die, he prayed that God would rescue him. While he was praying, he refused an offer of help from three passing boats because he was waiting for God's help, and then he drowned. When he was standing before God in heaven, he asked why God didn't rescue him. God replied, "I sent you three boats!" A PhD graduate from China studying at UNL shared this story as he prepared to be baptized at University Chapel in Lincoln this winter, saying that he realized God had been sending "boats" to rescue him for years now, and it was time for him to listen.

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down college campuses across the state, many international students stayed on campus and continued their studies online. One of them was this Chinese student, who was connected to the ministry at the University Chapel, but who was not a believer. Chapel staff connected him with a conversation partner volunteer, DCO Matt Myers of Seward. The student made it clear that he didn't just want to practice English—he wanted to study the Bible. The two of them began to read through the gospels of John and Luke together, and God used this time to grow faith in his heart.

After months of discussion, study, and prayer, this student recognized his need for baptism, and decided to do so at the Chapel before moving to another state for work. As he gave his testimony, he said he was "not an emotional guy," but that when he read the account of Jesus forgiving Peter after denying Jesus, he was deeply moved by the forgiveness that Jesus offered. He recalled a connection he had with Christians in his home town in China, then learning about Christianity at the Chapel, followed by his studies of the Gospel with his conversation partner, and he realized that God had been preparing him for faith for a long time.

Another student named Rebecca was confirmed on a recent Sunday at University Chapel. She began meeting on Tuesdays with Pastor Bill Steinbauer (first via Zoom, later in-person) more than a year ago. Together, they went page-by-page through the Small Catechism. Rebecca came with questions. Meeting with Rebecca, Pastor Bill reports, was a highlight of his week. "Students engage because they are motivated and they have just enough life experience to really care about the questions they are asking." Rebecca's confirmation that Sunday at the Chapel was a celebration.

COVID-19 may have changed the way campus ministry happens, but it hasn't shut it down entirely. Those involved in campus ministry in Lincoln, Kearney, Omaha, and Wayne have conducted Bible studies by Zoom, met for distanced fellowship and activities, offered counseling for students experiencing anxiety and depression, and have done all they can to keep students connected and growing in their faith. Despite the challenges of three unusual semesters, campus ministries in Nebraska have seen new students get involved and ask to be baptized, continuing students become more mature in their faith, and have even been blessed to hold weddings.

As high school students in your family and congregation prepare to graduate and move away for college this summer, encourage them to stay connected to their faith through Lutheran campus ministry. Learn more about getting them connected on our website at <https://www.ndlcms.org/connect-college-students-campus-ministry/>. If you are interested in becoming an English language conversation partner for an international student, please contact Mark Meyer at mark@lutheranchapel.org to learn more.



To help make sure campus ministries in the Nebraska District can continue to thrive and grow, please consider supporting this important ministry of the Nebraska District LCMS by making a donation in support of campus ministry. Also, as part of our *Building Together. In Christ. For Mission.* capital campaign, donations to the campaign to renovate the Chapel will be more than doubled, thanks to generous matching gift challenges from the Lienemann and Dunklau Foundations. For more information, contact Joyce at the District Office at (402) 643-2961. To support campus ministry, go to [ndlcms.org](https://www.ndlcms.org) and click on "Donate and Pay" and indicate that your gift is designated for campus ministry.

CONGREGATION ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

With many health restrictions now lifted, congregations in the District have begun to plan for anniversary celebrations again. We share this news through our Weekly Update newsletter each Wednesday. Please send information about your congregation's anniversary celebrations to communications@ndlcms.org and we will include it in the Weekly Update as space allows.

St. Peter's, Elk Creek, 150th anniversary, June 5 and 6. Saturday service at 4 p.m., and Sunday service, with the Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz as guest preacher, will be at 10 a.m. Both services will be followed by a meal.

Christ, Cairo, 100th anniversary, July 10-11. Saturday, July 10, All Church play at 6:00 p.m., BBQ at 7:00 p.m. and fireworks at dusk. Sunday, July 11, worship service at 10:30 a.m. with guest speaker Tim Hetzner of LLC Comfort Dogs; dinner following service; speaker Gary Thies of LCMS Mission Central at 1:00 p.m.; time capsule opening at 2:00 p.m.; and cake fellowship at 2:30 p.m.

Immanuel, Seward, 150th anniversary, Sunday, August 1, with worship at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. featuring Dr. Mark Rockenbach. A special meal will follow the service. An organ recital featuring James Clausen will start at 12:30 p.m. Please contact (402) 499-3051 for details.

Christ, Columbus, 150th anniversary with several celebrations this year. July 4, Celebration of the Future: Celebration of Christian Education special worship plans, confirmation picture, meal and family activities. (Church cornerstone was laid July 4, 1920.) September 11, Social event & fundraiser, American Legion, Columbus. September 19, (Music service) Christ Lutheran Church: Rooted in Christ's Love at Christ Lutheran At All Times (Church building completed and dedication of church building on September 18, 1921.) December 3-5, Christmas at Christ Lutheran Weekend, (Dinner Concert and Tour of Homes) Send emails to: christcolumbus150@frontier.com, or call Jill F. Goedeken 402-276-1076, Eric Frese 402-276-4086. To stay up to date: [facebook.com/CLS150th](https://www.facebook.com/CLS150th)

St. John's, Pierce, 150th anniversary, with several events before the anniversary. Email office@stjohnspierce.org or call the church office 402-329-4298 for more details. May 30, Rev. David Kipp preaching. June 20, Rev. Fish preaching. July 4, Pancake Feed 7:30-9:30 a.m., with 10 a.m. worship, Pastor Tuma preaching, and Parade in Pierce at 1:00 p.m. August 15, Rev. Lucas Miller preaching. September 4-5, two-day celebration with church and cemetery tours, history booths, food, music, kids games, Sunday worship at 10 a.m. and fellowship. Saturday evening music by the Southern Gospel Duet of Jim & Melissa Brady. Tickets will be available soon. Watch website for details: www.stjohnspierce.org under the 150th celebration tab.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 31, 2021, District Office closed for Memorial Day

June 24-27, 2021, National LWML Convention, Lexington, Kentucky

September 30-October 1, 2021, Circuit Visitors'/Vice-Presidents' Conference, Camp Carol Joy Holling, Ashland

October 21-22, 2021, All Professional Church Workers' Conference, Younes Conference Center, Kearney

November 13-14, 2021, Middle School Youth Gathering, Embassy Suites, LaVista

—2022—

March 14-15, 2022, Spring Pastors' Conference, Kearney

June 24-25, 2022, Nebraska District Convention, Younes Conference Center, Kearney

July 9-13, 2022, LCMS Youth Gathering, Houston, Texas

[Learn more about upcoming events by clicking here.](#)

CALLED TO GLORY

Mrs. Robin (Taylor) Schermbeck, wife of Rev. Robert Schermbeck, departed this life on April 9, 2021. With her husband, Robin served the congregations of Tecumseh and Elk Creek as secretary, youth leader, hand bell choir director, and VBS coordinator. She also served the communities as a teacher.

Mrs. Dorothy (Raabe) Cloeter, wife of Rev. Martin Cloeter, departed this life on April 25, 2021. The Cloeters served at churches and schools in Ohio, Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Nebraska.

Cynthia (Steffens) Kuntz, Commissioned Minister—teacher, departed this life on April 29, 2021. She served the Nebraska District as a teacher at Mount Calvary, St. Paul, and Zion Lutheran Schools in Omaha; and at Concordia Academy, Omaha since 2005.

An archive of six months of obituaries can be found on our website at <https://www.ndlcms.org/obituaries/>

CALL ACTIVITY IN THE NEBRASKA DISTRICT

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Michael Eckelkamp (StL'90) senior, St. John's, Denver, CO, to senior, Christ, Lincoln

Rev. John Genter (StL'10) candidate, Pacific Southwest District, to Concordia University, Seward

Calls Declined

Rev. Paul Crolius (StL'93) St. Peter's, Reedsburg, WI, to St. Paul, West Point

Rev. Matthew Mau (StL'13) St. John, Waco, to Holy Cross, Scott City, KS

Rev. Jonathan Rathjen (StL'95) Trinity, Auburn, to St. John/Zion, Beemer/Bancroft

Status Changes

Rev. Lester Dumer (Spg'64) emeritus, Central Illinois District, to emeritus, Nebraska District

Rev. Terence Groth (StL'79) Concordia University, Seward, to emeritus, Nebraska District

Installations & Ordinations

Rev. Paul Albers (StL'16) as pastor, Mount Olive, Omaha, May 2

Placements & Assignments

Brady Betten (StL) as SMP vicar, GraceHill, Omaha, April 28

Joseph Haggas (StL) as SMP vicar, River of Life, Omaha, April 28

Dan McMahan (StL) as SMP vicar, Faith, Lincoln, April 28

COMMISSIONED

Calls Declined

Gregory Johnson (AA'06) principal, St. Michael, Portage, MI, to principal, Trinity, Fremont

Other Transactions

Donald Bader (S'76) emeritus, resigned from the roster

David Bliss (S'79) candidate, to emeritus

Matthew Eiden (S'01) candidate, Iowa West District, to candidate, Nebraska District

Ann Fattig (S'01) candidate, to emeritus

Heidi Goehmann (CH'02) candidate, Missouri District, to candidate, Nebraska District

Lindsey Hayes (S'11) candidate, Indiana District, to candidate, Nebraska District

Troy Kane (S'12) candidate, Nebraska District, resigned from the roster

Michael Kipp (S'08) candidate, Iowa West District, to candidate, Nebraska District

Carol McDaniel (S'83) candidate, Pacific Southwest District, to candidate, Nebraska District

James Mol (AA'82) emeritus, Michigan District, to emeritus, Nebraska District

Katheryn Rathe (S'10) candidate, California-Nevada-Hawaii District, to candidate, Nebraska District

Hillary Snyder (S'13) candidate, Nebraska District, to candidate, Kansas District

Justin Tayon (S'15) candidate, Nebraska District, to candidate, Southern Illinois District

SPRING PLACEMENT REPORT

Graduates Placed in Nebraska

Spring graduates placed in Nebraska congregations include (if married, wife's name is in parentheses):

Columbus, St. John (associate): **Paul Rempfer** (Rachel), Blairstown, IA, StL

Norfolk, Our Savior (associate): **Eric Gradberg** (Kimberly), Joliet, IL, StL

Plattsmouth, First: **Ryan Maser** (Kari), Little Canada, MN, StL

Ponca, Trinity (Martinsburg): **Martin Hill** (Amberlyn), Westmoreland, NH, FtW

Winside/Carroll, St. Paul/St. Paul: **Alexander Blanken** (Anne), Davie, FL, FtW

Vicars in Nebraska

Assigned as vicars in Nebraska for the coming year (if married, wife's name is in parentheses):

Gretna, Good Shepherd: **Eric Larson** (Judith), Topeka, KS, StL
Imperial, Zion: **Andrew Hill** (Sarah), Laramie, WY, FtW

Lincoln, Good Shepherd: **Thomas Goodroad** (Marlyse), Holt, MO, FtW

Pierce, Zion: **Chad Berg**, Bismarck, ND, StL

Nebraskans Placed

Nebraskans completing seminary training this year were placed in April, including:

Justin Bangert, Seward, to Holy Trinity (associate), Edmond, OK, StL

Quincy Koll, Lincoln, to Christ the Cornerstone/Mount Olive, San Diego/Poway, CA, StL

Andrew Simpson, Wayne, to Our Savior, Sparks, NV, StL

Nebraskans Assigned as Vicars

The following Nebraskans have been assigned as a vicar for the coming year:

Mark P. Gaschler, Imperial, to Trinity, Norman, OK, FtW

Drew Oswald, Omaha, to Village, Ladue, MO, StL