

Workers Together

Kansas District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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December 2005

No Chicken Little Church

by President Keith E. Kohlmeier

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On the heels of catastrophic events (some have even used the term “of biblical proportions”) the question has been raised, “Are these signs that the end is near?” From news media to bully pulpits we have heard references to 9-11 and its aftermath, to wars and rumors of wars, and to the recent disasters and aftereffects of the hurricane season. There is a lot of talk today about the signs of the times. It just so happens that the subject not only comes in this season of calamity, but during the season of the Christian Church year that focuses upon this consideration, and is followed by a season of our preparation for Him coming among us. In this context we ask “Are these signs that the end is near?”

One of the clearest responses that I have heard to that question replied eloquently, “Yes, and No.” Yes, these are signs that the world which we live in is troubled by the effects of a fallen creation. There is finally no harmony of nature. For nature “was subjected” to reflect the fall of God’s chief creation, you and me. Every one of these events is evidence of the effect that sin has upon a creation which God Himself once pronounced “very good.” Already at the gate of the Garden, God set a plan into motion that we are enduring today. Are we seeing the culmination today? The reality is that what we see today is only a foretaste of the final culmination. To say that what we have experienced

recently is the full taste of the end is like standing on the edge of a pond and imagining what the ocean is like. The full culmination will be undeniable to all. At that time there will be no speculation by reporters or talk show hosts or placard carrying doomsday heralders. Every eye will see and every heart will confess it.

“The Lord is coming!”
He is coming now and in the future,
full of grace and truth.

So what IS the message of the church, most important of God’s children, today? Well, we could join the crowd and be imitators of the recently resurrected “Chicken Little” crowd whose singular message is, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling!” But the message of the church in the face of these things is not first of all, the sky is falling, or that the end is near, but the same glorious truth entrusted to us, “The Lord is coming!” He is coming. And in true grammatical form, He is coming now and in the future. He is coming among us now, full of grace and truth.

The gospel, which we know by our own gracious calling and which we are privileged to be chosen as communicators of, is never intended to “scare the hell” out of our neighbor, but to be a grace-ious invitation to know our Lord as Savior and Redeemer. We are a church striving to be ABLAZE with a Spirit that draws the world to the Christ who redeemed all of this creation to a restored relationship with its Creator. The gospel is not offering heaven as the alternative to hell, but a consideration of the loving response of a gracious God to a fallen world. We are no Chicken Little church. We are a church who would have all to be saved and come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Consider that the next time you are given the opportunity to answer the question, “What do you think about all of these things that are happening?” God bless your response, that you may be a herald of a grace-filled answer that communicates the great truth that Christ died to offer you life! Now and after this world is ended! God bless your ministry in these times.

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If you have any news items to
share with congregations in our
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Mission & Stewardship

Reverend Gary D. Rueter, Executive

Last Words by Rev. Gary Rueter

The Bible highlights last words of major human characters in its pages. Jacob/Israel provides a prophetic word about each of his sons and declares his burial wishes (Gen. 49); Joseph makes his descendents swear that they will “carry up my bones from here” (Gen. 50); Moses blesses eleven tribes in his penultimate chapter (Deut. 33); David’s



charges to Solomon and his instructions for establishing his reign are detailed in 1 Kings 2; and then the words of Jesus at his death: “It is finished” (not quite his last words since he lives again).

And then there are the last words of the two testaments. In the Jewish ordering of the first testament the last words are those of 2 Chronicles 36 and the edict of Cyrus permitting and requiring that God’s house in Jerusalem be rebuilt, a word of hope in the midst of the gloom of exile. And the Christian testament with the words of Revelation: “‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.”

These are my last words in *Workers Together* in Kansas. They do not have biblical authority but they have particular urgency for me because they have that adjective “last.” I see this as one more chance to talk about those things that are important to me in ministry. Here they are.

God is faithful. Trust him to keep his promises in Christ Jesus.

Be faithful in mission. We are a people sent by Christ; keep that outward focus.

Don’t just survive. To focus on surviving is to sign a death warrant for your congregation.

Learn, learn, and learn again. Life and ministry are too full for our two pounds of gray matter to get it all in our few years.

Find a niche ministry and do it. People around you are not being served. Find them and serve them.

Fail often. Do a new thing every quarter. Let the creative juices of the Spirit flow.

Welcome strangers. More and more people in Kansas are not Anglos of German origin.

Manage all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes. The LCMS definition of stewardship says it so well.

Lead with calm and thoughtfulness. Watch your own reactivity in the face of challenges. Study *Healthy Congregations* to grow in your ability to be less anxious.

Call them pre-Christians. Find words to talk about those outside the church that will engender respect and appreciation. We are to befriend and lift them up, not describe them only with pejoratives.

Get moving. The Ablaze movement is lighting fires of witness across the world. Help your members embrace opportunities to speak one-on-one about Jesus.

Give thanks. God is good all the time; all the time God is good. I thank God for the decade that I have been given to serve with you on the plains of Kansas. I thank God and you for your friendship and love in Christ.

Pray for one another. Enough said. Blessings....

Thank you, Gary

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. Would it be that those plans were shared with us on occasion. Our Lord speaks these words to Jeremiah and he speaks them to us as well.

Rev. Gary Rueter has accepted a call to Living Hope Lutheran Church in Stafford, VA to serve as Pastor. He will conclude ten years of faithful service to the congregations of the Kansas District on Wed., Nov. 30, 2005.

Earlier this year, Gary expressed that he was feeling the pull to return to the parish setting and wanted to explore where the Lord might lead him. He has now been provided that answer and opportunity. We wish him God’s speed in the ending of his ministry here and the beginning of his ministry there.

During his tenure in the Kansas District, Gary worked with countless congregations providing resources and motivation in many ways. He frequently shared his experiences with the staff and took great joy in being able to share in the celebrations of baptisms, anniversaries,

dedications, new starts and expanding ministries to name a few. Upon his arrival ten years ago, Gary set out immediately to visit every congregation throughout the state so that he could develop a personal relationship with not only the professional church workers but the men, women and children of our congregations. He probably logged more than 300,000 miles traveling the state in his endeavors.

As a member of the staff, Gary often challenged us to new and creative ways. He has many talents and was always willing to devote the time and energy necessary to support the other members of the team. His departure will no doubt leave a void.

“Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Thank you, Gary. Thanks for your years of dedicated service to the Kansas District LCMS. Thank you also Nancy. Thanks for sharing Gary with us and supporting him while he was away on those many evenings and weekends that you could not travel with him yourself. We love and will miss you both.

Educational Services

Jim Bradshaw, Executive

Lutheran Youth Fellowship, Part 2

by Jim Bradshaw

LYF is dedicated to the identification and development of leadership skills in young people. To that end, the Council of LYF Representatives (CLYFR) - meeting March 16-19, 2006 in St. Louis - established the LYF Teen Leadership Initiative (TLI). An important principal of TLI is that teens themselves can take responsibility for developing leadership in their peers.

TLI is a series of leadership training workshops. Each year at the annual CLYFR meeting, participants are trained to lead a leadership workshop in their districts. With the support of their districts, CLYFR representatives present the workshops in congregational, circuit and district settings for their peers.

There are currently seven leadership training components including:

- ◆ “TEENS REACHING TEENS” (TMT) focusing on outreach to teens in a peer ministry mode.
- ◆ “TEENS BUILDING TEAMS” (TBT) focusing on community development and building relationships among teens.
- ◆ “TEENS LEADING TEENS” (TLT) focusing on developing a dynamic servant leadership approach in youth ministry.
- ◆ “TEENS TEACHING TEENS” (TTT) focusing on young people nurturing the faith in each other through youth-led Bible class and discussion groups.
- ◆ “TRULY CARING TEENS” (TCT) focusing on peer ministry and care relationships by teens for teens.
- ◆ “TEEN ASSET TRAINING” (TAT) focusing of how teens can build assets in each other as defined by Search Institute.
- ◆ “TEEN MISSION TRAINING” (TMT) an aggressive witnessing program designed to help teens share their faith in a bold and uninhibited way.

Kansas District LYF Reps

Lois Bernhardson, Ascension, Wichita (Soph)

Megan Gust, Bethany, Overland Park (Soph)

AJ Longabaugh, Ascension, Wichita (Soph)

Jenna Chaput, Christ the King, Salina (Junior)
Megan and AJ will represent the Kansas District at the CLYFR 2006 in St. Louis in March. Each LYF Rep serves through their senior year of high school.

Media Library Memberships

Join the Media Library now for 2006. The cost is based on communicant membership: \$125 for over 200, \$95 for 100-200, and \$65 for under 100. Make your check payable to “Kansas District LCMS” and send with a completed remittance voucher to: Media Library; Kansas District LCMS; 1000 SW 10th Ave; Topeka, KS 66604-1104.

DCE Conference “Celebrate Choice”

When: Jan. 30-31, 2006

Where: Cross Wind Retreat Center, Hesston

Cost: \$70 (includes lodging and 4 meals)

Download the brochure at:

www.kslcms.org/ks_registration#dce

Al Gunderman Memorial Fund

The Kansas District Board of Directors established the Al Gunderman Memorial Fund for Continuing Education. This fund is to be offered as five grants of \$400 for servants of the church to attend a seminar, class or training workshop to enhance personal education.

The Board of Education is seeking applications for these five grants. Please submit a letter of request stating what you plan to attend and how you hope this will benefit your work. Give any other necessary information including how soon you need a response. Send your letter to Jim Bradshaw at jbradshaw@kslcms.org. If you have any questions, call 800-357-4421 ext. 206.



2006 National Youth Workers Conf.

The 2006 National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference, *CHOSEN: A Living House*, is set for July 20-23, 2006 at the Wyndham Orlando Resort in Orlando, FL.

Join us for four days of high impact general sessions featuring keynote speakers, music, community building, and daily Bible study; timely workshops covering a range of practical and theory-based topics; and interest focused forum dialogues with other volunteers and professionals about youth ministry technique and philosophy.

The conference is open to individuals working with youth in LCMS congregations and districts. Senior high aged youth are also able to attend with their youth leaders to participate in the latest Lutheran Youth Fellowship teen leadership training initiative.

Registration is now open. A special, \$225 Early Bird rate remains available through December 31, 2005. Special rates are also available for full-time students and ministry teams from the same congregation. Room rates at the Wyndham are \$109 for a single/double room per night.

National Youth Worker program details can be found at the conference website, www.nlywc.com.

Caring Ministry Reverend Rocky Mease, District Chaplain

News from Slidell by Mark Brewer, TDR Volunteer Coordinator

It is our baptismal call to go and to keep going, trusting that God will place before us the work that he would have us do in His Kingdom. As I return home from a week in Southern Louisiana, I am struck with the enormity of the task before us as we seek to support the congregations in Slidell.

The pictures and live reports from the scene of Hurricane Katrina did not prepare me for the impact of the extent of the devastation and need of the people of this area. As a Category 4 hurricane, the damage is greater and more pervasive than I could have imagined.

Rev. Dave Lewis of the Southern District Office told me that Katrina caused the greatest storm damage ever experienced in our country. While Hurricane Andrew produced significant damage to 20,000 homes, Katrina destroyed or damaged 850,000 homes. Though the 160 mph winds certainly caused damage, the water from the storm surge is continuing to cause pervasive damage.

As the water rose and receded over the two weeks following the storm, a caustic mix of chemicals swept from the homes, commercial buildings and holding tanks of gasoline stations, and this mud and sludge began the slow process of destroying all that it touched. Everything exposed to it absorbed this toxic mixture. Mold began to flourish in the heat and humidity that followed. It took two weeks for this tainted water to recede.

Then it took another week to ten days for emergency workers to get main thoroughfares cleared, electricity and clean drinkable water restored. So the people of Slidell were told to not return right away. This delay allowed the waterlogged materials in their homes to rot. Mold began to crawl up the dark and relatively cool areas behind the drywall in every exposed room.

As we read this, twelve weeks will have come and gone. Many of the homes, even those with insurance, go untouched. Not because the money is not available to repair them, but because there are not enough construction workers to do the work. Simple clean up and removal of dry wall can be done by anyone. **These people need our hands and backs to simply create a non-toxic living space.**

My heart is heavy knowing the extent of the need for these people that God has given us the call to hold up, support and help. We have the ability to make a huge difference with the time, talents and treasures of the congregations in Kansas and Oklahoma as we respond to the call of our baptism to love our neighbor. The need is great, but the task is achievable.

Please help in any way that you are able, and I am confident that you will be blessed. If you have any questions, contact me at disasterresponse@kslcms.org or 800-357-4421 ext. 220.



Lutheran Church Extension Fund Larry Crume, Vice President

LCEF News - Joyful Response

Winter is a great time to introduce giving options with the automatic stewardship program of Joyful Response. Joyful Response gives members of LCMS congregations and schools an automated method for their stewardship giving and tuition payments. This time-saving method is safe, convenient and free!

Through the Joyful Response program, congregations receive offerings directly into their LCEF account from members' personal bank accounts. These funds are then easily transferred into your operating account. Similarly, schools receive timely tuition payments each month. Electronic payments are automatically transferred on the requested dates at no charge. This creates a consistent cash flow for the church or school while supporting the ministry of Church Extension.

Simplify your stewardship giving with Joyful Response. To receive more information or a setup packet, call Larry Crume at 800-357-4421 ext. 205.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

Interest Rates - December 2005

Steward Account Rates:

Congregational Certificates

Demand	2.875%
Steward Account	3.375%

Individual Accounts

Less than \$1,000	2.125%
\$1,000 - less than \$5,000	2.250%
\$5,000 - less than \$10,000	2.625%
\$10,000 and over	3.125%



LCEF provides loans for LCMS Congregations, Schools and Professional Church Workers:

Monthly, quarterly or annual adjustable	5.625%
5 Year fixed	6.125%

Congregation Endowment (60-Month Fixed or Floating):

Min. Investment	Rate	APY
\$1,000	4.060%	4.122%
\$10,000	4.185%	4.251%
\$100,000	4.310%	4.380%

Planned Giving Garry Niehoff, Counselor

Who Needs a Will or Trust by Garry Niehoff

During the holiday season we think about family and friends. We also realize another church year has ended and new one has begun. With the coming of the new year we begin to plan the activities for the new church year and how we might serve the members' needs of our church. One of those needs may be the need for a will or a trust.

Who needs a will or trust? Everyone needs to do the planning necessary to write a will or trust. The young married couple with minor children need to consider who will finish raising their children if they are suddenly called home to be with their Father in Heaven. It has been stated that in the tragedy of September 11, nearly 5000 people lost their lives. If they reflect the national average, then 90% had no estate plan, 70% were married and 50% had minor

children. If these same statistics are reflected in our church, there are a lot of people who don't have a will.

This may be a very important time to plan a Wills Awareness Seminar in your church to serve this large number of people who need help in planning their will or trust. Call 1-800-357-4421 and ask for my office to set up a seminar in your church for the coming year. It is a free service provided for your church and its members by the District.

Both Doris and I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.



Business Office Debbie Crites, Business Manager

2005 Updated Resources Available

The updated 2005 Congregational Treasurer's Manual and 2005 Taxes for Ministers guide are both now available on the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod website. Go to www.lcms.org and click under the link "Resources" for Congregations. You are able to view or print the manuals from this site. Links to both resources are also on the

District website at www.kslcms.org under the Publications tab. Congregations will not automatically receive a copy of the updated Treasurer's Manual. If you would like us to send you a copy, call the business office at 800-357-4421 ext. 200 or email brenda@kslcms.org. Cost of a hard copy of the 2005 Treasurer's Manual is \$6.75.

Year End Checklist

✓ Kansas District Fiscal Year to Close

The District will close its 2005 fiscal year on **Friday, January 13, 2006**. Any receipt received after that date will be credited to the fiscal year 2006. In order to meet the standards for a not-for-profit corporation audit, we cannot credit any 2005 mission gift received after the close of our fiscal year so please work to meet this deadline. If you are sending any 2006 gift prior to January 13, please clearly indicate that the gift is for 2006 so that we may credit it correctly for your congregation.

✓ Housing Allowance

Housing allowance for Pastors and Commissioned Ministers should be approved by December 31 in order to obtain the full annual benefit of housing allowance exclusion for 2006. The designation should be adopted during a regular or special meeting of the church board and should be contained in the minutes of the meeting. A worksheet for calculating the housing allowance is included in the *Congregational Treasurer Manual*.

✓ W-4

Have all full-time and part-time employees complete a

new W-4 for 2006. This will insure that your withholding records for the year will be accurate. If the employee does not provide a completed W-4, the employer must withhold federal income tax as if the worker were single with no withholding allowance.

✓ Charitable Contributions

Charitable contributions for 2005 must be received before the first worship service in 2006 in order to claim the deduction. A contribution received after that date is counted as a contribution for 2006 for income tax purposes even if the check was written in 2005. However, checks that are written, mailed and postmarked in 2005 will still be deductible. A reminder in your weekly bulletin would be appropriate.

✓ Gifts to Church Workers

Christmas gifts to Church Workers from the congregation in most cases represent taxable income and not a tax-free gift. Be sure to report correctly on the recipients W-2 or 1099 the amount of these gifts. Also important to note - donations made by members for these gifts are not included as tax deductible contributions recorded by the church office.

Servant Trip to Slidell, LA

A group from Trinity, Garden City will be heading to Slidell, LA, Jan. 1-9, 2006 to help with Hurricane Katrina clean-up. Interested parties need to be 18 and older for this trip since we are taking mostly college students and older adults - group size is limited to 45 people. The cost is \$200 and covers transportation, housing, meals and material costs. For more information, contact DCE Leland Jackson at 620-276-3110 or dceleland@tlcgck.kscoxmail.com.

Theological Convocation

- When:** Jan.9-10, 2006
Theme: "The Ministry of Pastor and Laity: Working Together"
Place: Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Wichita
Features: ♦ Presentations on Church and Ministry
♦ Small Group Discussions of Bible and Theology
Add on: Pre-Lent Study on Jan. 11
Invitees: Professional church workers and up to 3 laypersons from each congregation

Choir Member Workshop

Concordia Seminary will offer its 14th Annual Schola Cantorum: An Adult Choir Member Workshop on Saturday, Jan. 14, 2006. The workshop will be held in The Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus and the Clara and Spencer Werner Auditorium on the Seminary Campus. It is open to all choir members, directors and ministers of music. Dr. Christopher Cock, director of choral and vocal activities at Valparaiso University, will serve as this year's clinician.

The cost for the Schola Cantorum is \$100 per congregation (200 or more members) and \$85 (less than 200 members). Lunch and choral music are not included in the fee. For more information or registration forms, call 314-505-7463.

A Choral Reading Session, sponsored by Concordia Publishing House, will be held in conjunction with the Schola Cantorum on Friday, Jan. 13 from 7-8:30p.m. Rev. David Johnson will preview new and current titles of music. This event is free, but registration is required. Call 314-268-1058 or email cphmusic@cph.org to register.

Special Needs Corner

by Rev. Ervin A. Daugherty Jr.

Zan Tyler's eighth step to embracing your child with special needs or without special needs is to remember that God often uses people with great weaknesses to do His will. Moses himself said, "I am slow of speech and tongue." God teaches us many things through our weaknesses and the weaknesses of others.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 913-469-5566 or 800-750-5566 or edaugherty@blhs.org.

Stewardship Resources

by Rev. Ken Kaufmann

The fourth of the eight LCMS Biblical Stewardship Principles states that, "God's stewards are uniquely singular, yet profoundly plural." That's a fancy way of saying that when it comes to stewardship we are in this together. The meaning to the principle says it very well: "God's stewards recognize that their lives are not solo performances but are personal responses to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world."

Some new resources developed to help share these truths with members have been posted on the DCS-Stewardship Ministry website: www.lcms.org/stewardship.
▶ **"We're in this together and the banner over us is love"** - Four Bible studies, two sets of sermon notes and a faith promise (pledge) sample form under the heading of "Stewardship Emphasis 2006." They are all free for downloading and use. You may customize the resources with the name of your congregation and other information that will make it "yours."

▶ **Biblical Stewardship Principles Leader's Notes** - A new set of Leader's Notes for studying the eight LCMS Biblical Stewardship Principles under the heading of "Biblical Stewardship Principles." The Leader's Notes include 20 pages of background information and discussion starters for doing a study of the principles. On that same site you can find a variety of versions of the principles including some for early childhood and middle elementary levels. The principles have also been translated into French, Portuguese and Spanish.

▶ **Power Point Presentations** - Two new Power Point presentations, free for downloading and use. You may also customize them for use with your congregation or group. One is an introduction to the Biblical Stewardship Principles; the other is a presentation developed to help God's people connect money and mission in an appropriate way. The Biblical Stewardship Principles' Leader's Notes serve as a guide for the first presentation; a separate discussion guide for the "Connecting Money and Mission" presentation is posted on the website.

▶ **Bulletin Sentences and Newsletter Articles** - Free bulletin sentences and newsletter articles. The bulletin sentences are based on one of the three assigned Scripture readings for each Sunday. The newsletter articles are tied in with the calendar and church year seasons. Back issues of the bulletin sentences and newsletter articles are archived on the site.

▶ **For Sale Stewardship Resources** - About 200 different resources (Bible studies, tracts, videos, etc.) are featured under the heading of "Resources for Stewardship." You can also go to www.stewardshipadvisors.org for a catalog of resources such as Bible studies, trifolds, annual emphases, and other topical items.



Guinea Prayers

Prayer requests from the Norton family:

- ✠ Thanksgiving for the Monday leadership training meetings taking place
- ✠ Thanksgiving for the growth in our leaders
- ✠ Pray that God's Holy Spirit would work in the hearts of those taking the baptism course that they may be forgiven, saved, and receive the Holy Spirit through this sacrament
- ✠ Pray against the apathy and materialism that has taken many away from further discipleship
- ✠ Pray for our expansion into a new area to the North and West of us that we are targeting reaching after the new year with national evangelists
- ✠ Pray for our continued health and stamina as the workload is heavy and the trials are many

Prayer requests from Dr. Kristen Schmaltz:

- ✠ Growth and development of Guinea Lutheran church and especially Pastors Robert and Julien
- ✠ Treatment, healing, and hope for the sick and hungry
- ✠ Medical training and community healthcare in Guinea - Community health workshop in December
- ✠ Economic challenges for nationals in Guinea; Peace in elections and countries in general in West Africa
- ✠ Power, lights and water in Dr. Schmaltz's home

Prayer requests from the Heiney family:

- ✠ For our family as we get ready to leave the US on December 1. Pray we will be able to get everything done in time and figure out how to get all our things to the field.
- ✠ For the boys as we are leaving them behind. Pray we will all be able to adjust to this huge change in our lives.
- ✠ For the church in Guinea. Pray we are able to help them to stand on their own and wean off of dependency.
- ✠ For our guys at the seminary, that they will make good use of their training and will be a blessing to the Guinean church when they return.
- ✠ For safe travel to Guinea, and for God to go ahead of us and prepare housing, supplies, transportation, etc. for us.

Prayer requests from the Oetting family:

- ✠ Thanksgiving for the safe return of Sharon and the children to Siguiri. Please continue to pray for re-adjustment for the family. Pray also for volunteer teacher Donna Meyer's work with the Oetting children.
 - ✠ Pray for Jon's teaching ministry with lay pastor Kwaku. He completed study of two volumes of the series on Lutheran worship during our home leave. He is currently testing on the various lessons with Jon.
 - ✠ Pray for the Maninka team missionaries. They are meeting to prepare a three year strategy to share the Gospel with the Maninka people in Guinea.
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