



*Our mission is to support and encourage the members of the District in carrying out the mission Christ has given His Church.*

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## LCMS Kansas District Board Report Summaries May 2020

### DISTRICT STAFF REPORTS

#### President's Office

Rev. Justin Panzer

**COVID-19 Response.** Our motto at the District during the pandemic has been “prepared but not panicked” as we’ve sought to fulfill our mission to support and encourage our members. The unique work demands created by the pandemic have included caring for the office staff, managing information and ideas, and providing resources and communication pieces to the entire District. With the move to online worship, President Panzer has been able to watch more than 80 sermons from around the district.

**Counseling Support.** The district is working on creating a list of vetted counselors throughout the state who can assist workers and members of our congregations. The project has become an even higher priority in the wake of COVID-19 and its associated stressors.

**Calls.** As of early May, we had 11 calling congregations. We received two pastors and four vicars from Call Day at our seminaries. The call process is moving forward, but congregations are being careful with voting during COVID-19 to ensure that voters are not disenfranchised.

**President's Residence.** The Panzers, who currently reside in Abilene, have been exploring a potential move to Silver Lake or Topeka but have not closed the door on remaining in Abilene. In an informal survey of his fellow district presidents, President Panzer found that one-third of them live 25+ miles away from their district office.

**Final Thoughts on the Quarter.** At the conclusion of his report, President Panzer remarked on the joy of being a district president during this challenging time, noting, “The demands are great, but God continues to supply my every need and support me with a wonderful group of people. My prayers are with you, and I continue to covet your daily prayers as well. We pray for an end to this scourge and to our time of coming together again, especially in our local congregations where we can receive the Sacrament with one another.

#### Missions and Stewardship

Rev. Dan Galchutt

**COVID-19 Response.** Rev. Galchutt’s pandemic-related activities included cancelling travel plans, identifying stewardship and missions considerations for congregations, working on the office transition

to remote work, planning for staff meetings, planning for potential financial challenges in the District Office, attending dozens of extra meetings (Zoom) and webinars for learning and sharing, and contacting Mission Grant recipients to check on how things are going. In his report to the board, Rev. Galchutt noted that there's evidence of a spiritual awakening in the country, similar to what followed 9/11. One study, for example, found that 22% of non-Christians indicated that they're now praying and reading the Bible.

**COVID-19 Soldiers of the Cross Response Initiative.** Rev. Galchutt is serving as the Kansas District's grant administrator for the Soldiers of the Cross COVID-19 initiative, created by the LCMS and LCEF to provide financial assistance to church workers and other eligible individuals experiencing financial challenges due to COVID-19. The application process runs through the Synod, but districts award grants and oversee the process.

**Congregational Partnership Project:** We're moving forward with our plan to produce resources that will aid congregations in developing partnerships. COVID-19 has slowed down the timeline, but we're aiming to finish the materials and launch the webpage in late May or early June.

**Church Planting:** Interested church planters have held three meetings in the past quarter to discuss the possibility of planting a church somewhere around De Soto (or the K10 corridor). Pastor Jason Boetcher (Trinity Family of Faith, Basehor) is leading the process locally. In light of COVID-19, discussions are on hold until July.

**West Africa Partnership:** The West Africa Mission Committee opted not to make the usual Pentecost Offering appeal this year. Instead, we'll use restricted funds at the district to support one year of operation at the new CLET seminary in Guinea. Rev. Gary Schulte, area director for Central and West Africa, has high hopes for the CLET in Guinea because of the small but strong Guinean Lutheran Church.

## Education and Youth / Caring Ministry

James Bradshaw

**Call Process.** Spring is typically a busy time for calls in our schools. We have several schools that are engaged in the process; all have followed their constitution and bylaws in moving ahead with the process while observing safety protocols.

**COVID Impact on Schools.** Our Kansas District schools had to move online after all Kansas schools were closed in mid-March. The use of ZOOM has been key in maintaining teaching and learning, which officially commenced online March 30. All of our K-8 schools met the April 8 deadline for submitting continuous learning plans. Most schools are planning to resume face-to-face instruction in the fall, but they're all aware they need a Plan B.

**Regular Meetings and Contacts with Workers.** To support workers, Jim Bradshaw initiated school-wide weekly contacts beginning Monday, March 23. These check-ins have focused on all elementary/middle school staff members, including pastors, principals/school leaders, teachers and administrative assistants. In addition to sharing words of encouragement and offering prayer support, prayer requests have been solicited and forwarded to President Panzer and Rev. Galchutt to keep them abreast of local situations and individual needs. DCEs have also been contacted. Administrative Assistant Janet Powell has connected with each early childhood center in the District. Nine of 45 preschools are currently open.

**Events.** The summer GOSPEL Conference and the July Saints Alive gathering have been cancelled. The Early Childhood Conference in July will proceed (with social distancing), as will the Pastors' Wives

Retreat. Lutheran Valley Retreat is expected to make a call by May 15 on summer camps. For the fall, we're planning to proceed with the Pastors and Educators Conferences, Junior High Rallies, and KDYG but will continue to monitor developments closely.

## LCEF

Jeff Maltz

**LCEF COVID 19 Response.** LCEF has provided a variety of resources during COVID-19, including low-interest disaster response loans, available to congregations and rostered church workers during the pandemic at 0% interest for first 6 months. LCEF has also highlighted the Joyful Response program, a stewardship resource for e-tithing and e-tuition payments for LCMS congregations, schools and registered service organizations (RSOs). To help provide direct assistance for workers and others, LCEF has distributed \$1 million dollars to the 35 LCMS districts for immediate relief grants (\$28,500 per district) through the COVID-19 Soldiers of the Cross Response Initiative.

**Kansas District LCMS Operating Revenue for 2020.** LCEF's first-quarter operating revenue of \$68,943 is reflective of LCEF productivity in the past year. Given the Covid-19 environment in which we are currently operating, this revenue might be reduced next year.

### Business Summary

- Through April 2019, the LCEF Kansas District has **32** LCEF loans outstanding with a balance of **\$15,126,094**.
- The LCEF Kansas District has **1922** investors.
- Total amount invested: **\$52,242,022**

**Activity in the Kansas District.** The Kansas District LCEF Board of Managers approved a loan to Beautiful Savior in Olathe, Kansas to remodel the church sanctuary, add a fellowship hall with commercial kitchen, expand the preschool and child development center, and add a maintenance building. The resolution is being presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

## Business Office

Heather Williams

**COVID-19 Office Transition.** On March 26, the District staff transitioned to working from home. All staff continue to be available by email, and Lead Staff by cell phone. Calls to the District Office are routed through the Business Manager's voicemail and sent to the appropriate staff member. Lead staff meets via Zoom twice weekly, and the full staff meets via Zoom once per week. We try to limit building usage to one or two employees at a time.

**Paycheck Protection Program.** The Business Office continues to answer questions and provide help to congregations and schools interested in applying for the Paycheck Protection Program. Please access the Coronavirus Resources page on our website for more information regarding the PPP.

**2020 Audit.** We received a draft of our January 15, 2020 audit report which contains a clean opinion and no management deficiencies.

**Estate Gifts.** In September 2019, the District received notice that we are the beneficiary of a gift from the Arden & Lois Haubein estate, which has been designated for missions in Kansas, scholarships for men entering the ministry, and planned giving. On April 1, 2020, the District received notice of an

additional estate gift from Mrs. Norma Jean Brengman that will benefit the Kansas District and Grace, Ulysses in the areas of ethnic ministries, seminary scholarships, and new ministries.

**Retreat Center.** The Business Office has assumed management of the Retreat Center. Thanks to Pastor Alan Stahlecker, we have several names of lay members willing to serve as a board of trustees. The Retreat Center has remained open during the stay-at-home order for groups of ten or less. Extra measures have been taken by cleaning staff as recommended by the hotel industry. We did lose several reservations because of COVID-19 and issued full, unconditional refunds.

**Convention Assessment.** District Convention assessment letters will be sent to congregations in May. The proposed assessment, four cents higher than 2018, takes into account inflation and a smaller number of total communicants.

## Communications

Kris Bruss

**COVID-19 Response.** We sent our first coronavirus letter to members on March 4. Since that date, the District's communication agenda has been driven largely by COVID-19, with four primary goals: to keep people informed, provide resources, pass along good advice, and encourage workers and all LCMS Kansans. The communication response has included coronavirus resource pages on the website (general and worship), biweekly worker updates (with a special focus on breaking news and changing executive orders), daily weekday Scripture verses and prayers on Facebook, a variety of special letters and documents (e.g., Soldiers of the Cross materials), and COVID-19 features in *Workers Together* and *The Lutheran Witness*.

**COVID-19 Journal.** In the initial weeks of the pandemic, the situation was changing rapidly, and we were flooded with information. We started a COVID-19 journal to impose some order on that information and record additional developments. The journal has already been useful as a reference and will be valuable for creating a crisis response communication framework for the future.

**District Convention.** The public phase of the 2021 Kansas District Convention is set to launch in early May, when the website goes live and we mail a nominations packet to congregations and workers. Convention-related communication tasks included securing a convention logo, building the convention webpage, and editing documents in the mailing packet. The theme for the 74<sup>th</sup> convention is "Proclaim, Teach, Share," based on 1 Peter 2:9-10 ("you are a royal priesthood ...").

**Upcoming Projects.** Special projects in the pipeline include a 2018 resolutions update, which will be included in the June/July issue of the Kansas edition of *The Lutheran Witness*, the congregational partnerships webpage and associated materials, and our Ministry Impact Report, expected in late summer.

## BOARD REPORTS

*Special note: Due to the pandemic, all service board meetings were conducted via Zoom in April, with board chairs providing brief verbal highlights at the full Board of Directors meeting in May.*

### Board of Missions

Marvin Schulteis, Chair

**Hispanic Ministry.** Discussions of Hispanic Ministry in Kansas City continue, with a focus on ensuring that pastoral support is available for congregations in the area.

**Report Review.** The board reviewed quarterly reports from Rev. Brent Smith of Mission Central and Mission Grant recipients. Chair Schulteis reported that it's very gratifying to review these reports and see the work that our congregations are doing.

**Grant Request from T.I.G. Partnership (SW Kansas).** The Board of Missions will wait to consider the special request for grant support for the T.I.G. Partnership until we return to more normal operations.

**Synod Res. 4-04A.** In April 2020, we were expecting a joint report from the LCMS Board for National Mission and Board of International Mission encouraging congregations, schools, and districts to participate in reviewing and proposing Synod mission and ministry emphases. Work on the project is on hold due to the pandemic.

### Board of Education

Bruce Schultz, Chair

**Teacher Call Process.** The call process for teachers and principals is on hold while COVID-19 is in the foreground. Congregations and schools are doing behind-the-scenes work related to the call process. Because schools and individuals need to make plans for next school year, while the call process is on hold, schools may issue a contract to a teacher or principal now, with the contract being turned into a call when the situation allows.

**School Chapel Offering.** The 2020 worker conferences are still on the schedule for October. The special September Chapel/Sunday School/Bible Class offering has been designated for the District Church Worker Care Fund. Schools and congregations are invited and challenged to participate in this offering, which will be presented at the October conference. The goal is \$50 from every congregation.

**Report Review.** The board reviewed written committee reports from Early Childhood, Youth Ministry, Adult Education, Lutheran Schools Accreditation, and Children and Family Committee. The board noted that the Adult Education Committee is working on the three-year lectionary for the Congregation at Prayer series, which is a great opportunity to grow in teaching the faith at home.

**Colloquy Support.** The board worked on developing a resolution regarding the use of District funds to help pay for colloquy for teachers and principals. The resolution is expected to be submitted for consideration by the full board at the July Board of Directors meeting.

### Board of Caring Ministry

Rick Hanebutt, Chair

**Report Review.** The board reviewed reports from Disaster Response, Parish Nurse Ministry, Church Worker Care Committee, Older Adult Task Force, and the Pastors' Wives Retreat, noting cancellations and rescheduled activities.

**List of Vetted Counselors.** The board heard an update from President Panzer on the creation of a list of approved counselors for referrals in the Kansas District. Potential counselors interested in being added to the list will be asked several questions as part of the vetting process. The list currently includes names from all areas of the district except southwest Kansas. The board discussed the short- and long-term implications of establishing and maintaining such a resource, with the suggestion of establishing an annual review process.

**Resolutions Review.** The board continued to work on updating progress on the resolutions assigned to it.

## Board of Stewardship

Rich Schotte, Chair

**Budget Review.** District congregational receipts are 22.43% of the budget projections for the first quarter. Expenses are at 22.96% of budget, which is in line with expectations.

**Financial Considerations Regarding COVID-19.** Heather Williams presented a Congregational Giving chart for 2017-2020 with a comparative graph showing a drop in February and April from the three-year average. It appears that Covid-19 is having some immediate effect on receipts. Although April 15 receipts are down, we have a few ways to offset that trend. We've been blessed by careful budgeting in the past, which has created a financial cushion. Expenses have been reduced, as well, particularly with respect to travel, meetings, and utilities. The Board of Stewardship will take a careful look at the 2021 budget in the months ahead, beginning with a meeting on June 1.

**Planned Giving.** The Planned Giving arrangement with the LCMS Foundation has not yet been finalized. Plans are still in progress, although advocate training is on hold due to Covid-19 concerns. The Board will revisit the status of the arrangement at its June 1 meeting.

**Emergency Fund for the District:** Non-profit organizations are advised to have a 3-9 month reserve to meet costs in an emergency situation. The Board discussed a target for emergency reserves and will continue this discussion at the meeting on June 1.

### ACTION ITEM

The board adopted the following resolution:

- Resolved, that an additional \$10,000 be designated to the Soldiers of the Cross COVID-19 Response Initiative from the funds received from the Doris Meyer bequest (which will bring the total designated for this purpose to \$20,000).

## Board of Administration

Dave Bruns, Chair

**Treasurer's Report.** As of April 15, District congregational mission commitments are at 22.43% of the fiscal January 15, 2021 budget and \$76,469 behind last year's receipts. Actual congregational mission receipts are ahead of pledges by approximately 57.78% or \$116,562. Maintaining the ability to continue as a going-concern is not an issue.

**IT Issues.** The District Office has experienced some technology-related challenges, including email hacks and server issues. Additional barriers have been put in place to prevent further pirating of District email accounts.

**Board Governance.** The board discussed how best to describe the type of governance in place in the District, noting that it's not really "policy-based governance," as has been suggested. The board noted the description in the District Operations Manual, which states that the Board of Directors carries out the mandates of District Convention and Synod by "planning, budgeting and supervising of staff activities; forming boards, councils, committees and commissions for specific tasks of the District and supervising their activity, calling or hiring executive staff personnel; providing annual review of staff

positions; preparing a three-year work program, adopting an annual budget and insuring effective and efficient use of funds.”

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

**The board adopted the following resolutions:**

- **Resolved**, to assess district congregations for the 2021 convention at \$1.15 per communicant.
- **Resolved**, that the Kansas District Board of Directors acknowledge gifts received from January 16, 2020 to April 15, 2020 in the amount of \$33,426.18