



DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA



DUAL MEMBERSHIP?

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Living here in the great north country of North Dakota, we have a lot of members of our congregations who travel south for the winter. They are known as snowbirds. Occasionally I have pastors and laity ask me about dual membership. What follows is how I would answer this concern.

Sometimes when people have multiple homes in different areas of the country, they understandably attend different churches. It is good to attend church faithfully and to receive Word and Sacrament wherever you are. Some consider this “dual membership,” and feel that they belong to two congregations.

Here is a scenario that happened while I served as pastor of a congregation. I received membership information from another church for someone who was already a member of my congregation. The secretary from the other church misunderstood her pastor request, which was to ask our church for her membership

information. Are you confused? Yes, you say? So was I. How is it that a member of one congregation is on the member list of another?

It is called “dual membership.” (I didn’t have to look up or send the member’s information — they already had it.)



Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President

There is, however, no such thing as dual membership. You can only belong to one body at a time. And if you have membership with another congregation, God forbid that congregation would be in another church body with a different confession of faith. For as you can only be a member of one congregation, you can only have one confession of faith, of one denomination.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthian church:

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” — **1 Cor. 12:12-13**

You see, whatever part of the body you are cannot function in another body.

See **MESSAGE**, Page 2

Shepherd's Hill hosting marriage retreat



A Marriage Enrichment Retreat will be held Feb. 21-23 at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads.

Presented by Rev. Arie Bertsch, North Dakota District president, the retreat begins with dinner at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 21. Sessions follow at 8 p.m.

The cost is \$150 per couple for one night, or \$200 per couple for two nights. Register by contacting Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads at director@shretreat.org or 701-244-5225.

Register for 'MERCY IN ACTION' conference

A one-day conference, "Mercy in Action: Caring for People with Christ's Love," will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 29, at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, located at 801 East Denver Ave., in Bismarck.

Plan to attend as the conference will highlight ministry opportunities and how lives are impacted as God's people "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 100:2).

- ▶ Attendees will meet **Comfort Dog Gideon**, from Lutheran Church Charities' comfort dog ministry, and hear about the impact that comfort dogs have when people are in crisis.



- ▶ Rev. Adam Filipek, pastor of Holy Cross and Immanuel, Lidgerwood, will present "Rich In Mercy." Pastor Filipek has previously served congregations in New York and Ferguson, Mo.
- ▶ Members of Zion Lutheran Church, Bismarck, will share about its IMPACT ONE mentorship program (in partnership with Bismarck High School), and Shepherd of the Valley members will talk about its partnership with Wachter Middle School and People Matter.
- ▶ Rev. Rick Jones, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch chaplain, will share on the impact of caring for children.

The cost is \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door. To register, go to soto-bis.org/mercy-in-action-registration. Lunch will be provided.

The Shepherd of the Valley Human Care Committee is hosting the conference.

Help keep archives updated

Happy 2020 — Make this the year you get any extras of your church history books to the North Dakota District, along with a pictorial directory. Help your district get up-to-date information on your church. It's always a joy and challenge to help people when they call asking about their grandfather who was a pastor, or if we have a confirmation record from a closed church. Send your books to ND District, P.O. Box 9029, Fargo, ND 58103. Call 701-293-9001 if you have questions about what is needed.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Think about it: You can only be one heart in one body. You can only be one tongue in one body, and so forth. As we read in 1 Corinthians, when baptized into Christ, we are all of the one body of Christendom. We are one by faith. As was the case in Acts 11:27-30:

"During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they

did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul."

We see here that different regions of the greater church were helping each other. They each belonged to a smaller body, but each was a part of the whole of Christendom.

Similarly, you are a member of the body of (fill in the name) Lutheran Church of (fill in the town or address), North Dakota, of which Christ is its head. That Lutheran church is a member of the body of the North Dakota District, of which Christ is its head. The North Dakota District is a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, of which Christ is its head.

Maybe a different way to understand the importance of belonging to only one

congregation at a time is to consider the sad possibility of church discipline. Church discipline for unrepentant sin can be done by only one congregation. And when one body of the church uses discipline, the whole body acknowledges and respects it.

Therefore, you can be a member of only one church at a time. You can belong to the larger denomination and receive its blessings as you travel and live in different areas of the country, but you cannot hold a dual membership.

For a better understanding of all of this, please read 1 Corinthians 12 ... yes, the whole chapter!

"You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

— 1 Cor. 12:27

Registration open for Higher Things events

It's that time of year already – time to get registered for another Higher Things conference!

Groups are going in two different directions this summer for “Watermarked” — one to Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. (June 29-July 2) and one to Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Mich. (July 21-24). There is group transportation being arranged for both locations, along with some fun events along the way.

Tana McKenna, parish assistant of Zion, Gwinner, will handle registrations for Michigan. You can reach Tana at zionwinner@gmail.com or 701-308-0411.

Diane Pierson, Board of Christian Education chair, St Paul's, Minot, will handle registrations for the Colorado trip. You can reach Diane at christianed@anchoredminot.com or 701-721-7844.

For more information about the conference, go to higherthings.org/conferences/watermarked2020. For more information about Higher Things, visit higherthings.org.



Also consider attending a Higher Things retreat, which will be held at two sites in North Dakota.

The retreat titled “What is Church?” will be held March 27-28 at St. Paul's, Minot, and Immanuel, Wahpeton. It is one retreat at two

locations with area North Dakota District pastors presenting.

Picture the sanctuary filled with teenagers — eager for the organ to begin the opening lines of the liturgy or their favorite hymns — listening intently as they learn how their Lutheran faith applies to their lives and relationships, and laughing as they horse around playing games and getting to know other youth from the area. That's a glimpse of what will happen at this retreat.

The cost is \$50 per registrant, which covers lodging, food, speaker fees, games and snacks.

For more information, visit higherthings.org, click on “Retreats” and scroll down for the link to either Minot or Wahpeton.

Follow in Paul's footsteps

Christian Travelers of the North is presenting a trip to Greece: “In the Footsteps of Paul the Apostle,” featuring a three-night Greek Islands and Turkey cruise, to be held May 6-16.

Tour highlights include Athens, a taverna dinner show, Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Santorini, Thessaloniki, Kavala, Philippi, Meteora, Delphi, Corinth and the Acropolis.

For more information, visit the North Dakota District website at nodaklcms.org.



Thank you LWML

The LWML North Dakota District helped underwrite Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch's Spiritual Life program during the 2018-20 biennium.

The Spiritual Life program, the heart of the Ranch's services to children, is coordinated and overseen by Rev. Rick Jones, who also serves as chaplain. The Christian values children learn at the Ranch aid in their healing, provide a foundation of hope and help them to be successful in their treatment.

Children at the Ranch attend Chapel and participate in Spiritual Life groups, and meet individually with an on-campus member of the Spiritual Life team. They are also invited to minister to others by working with the elderly, attending Bible camp, volunteering for the community during special events and more.

The Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch staff is grateful for the women of the LWML — for their support of the ministry and belief in the mission.

Plan to attend LMWL CONVENTION

The LWML North Dakota District Convention will be held June 26-28 at Delta Hotel by Marriott in Fargo.

The theme is “Great is the Lord,” based on Ps. 145:1-3:

“I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”

Among the many highlights, Jan Struck will be the keynote speaker; Rev. Dr. Robert Roegner, former director of LCMS World Mission, will be the mission speaker; and Wendysue Fluegge will be the songleader and provide entertainment. She was songleader at the LWML convention in Albuquerque, N.M., in 2017.

For more information, visit ndlwml.org/convention-2020.

Milestones

Larry and Joanne (Rother) White, members of Grace, Cooperstown, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Feb. 14.

Larry serves as an elder at Grace and Joanne has been active in LWML, taught Sunday school and is currently financial secretary. They have a son, Tom, who lives in Fargo. Joanne and Larry give thanks to God for the many blessings He has given them.



Share your milestones, and news

We would love to recognize birthdays of our members who are 90 years or older and wedding anniversaries of 50 years or more. We need your help. Please let us know if anyone in your congregation has a milestone coming up. The information needs to be submitted about five weeks ahead of time to allow for preparations and printing. (Articles have to be submitted to us by Feb. 25 for publication in April). Pictures are optional and would depend on available space.

If you have any other articles or ideas for the district publications, please contact Marie, district communications manager, at news@nodaklcms.org. Thank you!

Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads

Winter is here!

For your snow fun, Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads is a great place for a basecamp, with ice fishing all through the Turtle Mountains, and cross-country skiing and downhill skiing just down the road.

If you have a youth group event planned, consider staying with us and letting us take care of the meal planning and preparation. It means more time for you to have fun.

Give us a call to schedule your stay here at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads. See the Marriage Retreat information on page 2 for another opportunity to visit and stay.

Rev. Jon Bonine
Executive Director

- ▶ director@shretreat.org
- ▶ shretreat.org
- ▶ [Facebook.com/shretreat](https://www.facebook.com/shretreat)



The Lord is my helper



"So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" — Heb. 13:6

Have you ever felt down or even depressed about the challenges facing congregations in rural and small-town America?

It's altogether too easy to fall into that trap. Between the perceived shrinking populations, the aging congregations and members with competing interests, it can seem difficult at best to carry out ministry, at least to carry it out the way we'd like to or have in the past. These factors often bring about a lack of hope and a sense of fear of the future.

Yet, it's helpful for us to remember that the Lord of the Church always has work for us to accomplish.

There are so many opportunities for us in rural and small-town congregations. There is still an enormous mission field all around us. Out of 6,000-plus LCMS congregations, some 3,136 are in rural and small-town settings. These numbers show us that there are nearly 17 million people living in and around these congregations. With a

conservative estimate of 50 to 60 percent of those folks being unaffiliated with a church or a faith of any sort, the possibilities for outreach are most assuredly there.

Not to mention that there are studies which show us that in many of these areas there is beginning to be a positive net in-migration of people and even a "Brain Gain" of sorts, where in the past it was mostly a loss.

Of course, we must deal with the realities of our age. But we simply cannot forget that the Lord of the Church has it all under control according to His will. Bear in mind what we are told in Heb. 13:20-21:

"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Written by Rev. Todd Kollbaum, pastor of Trinity, Madison, Neb., and director of LCMS Rural and Small Town Mission (RSTM). This article appears in the January 2020 RSTM newsletter.