



DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA



LCMS/Enik M. Lunsford

The practice of

CLOSED COMMUNION

to be able to come and receive communion in our churches.

Therefore, the issue is “Why shouldn’t we commune anyone who wants to commune,” and “Why shouldn’t we commune at other churches that are not LCMS?”

First, we really need to understand what church fellowship is. Churches are in fellowship when they believe, teach and confess alike the teachings of God’s Word in all its truth and purity. Therefore, any church that has a different understanding of God’s Word (the Bible) — for example, we would say it *is* the Word of God and others claim it *only contains* the Word of God — has a different confession of faith. There is a different understanding of the rule and norm of what we believe, teach and confess. A different confession of faith would be in opposition to God’s Word, because it is not with the apostles’ teachings and fellowship. This we would understand from Acts 2:42-44:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”

Some would say Holy Communion is an individual matter between them and God. The Lord’s Supper is not a personal matter, but rather about what we believe, teach and confess as a church. The Bible

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Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President

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

As I write this article, the Synod convention has not yet begun. I have just recently returned from floor committee meetings in St. Louis and am blessed to serve on Floor Committee 4, which is “Life Together.” We deal with overtures submitted by LCMS congregations and districts on various items, including “A Faithful Practice of Holy Communion.”

What amazed me is the continued sending of many overtures dealing with the practice of closed communion. These overtures come because many are still not practicing what we believe is good and biblical teaching. A significant issue in the church of this day and age for our pastors is this practice of closed communion. We educate our youth to be confirmed in the faith before they receive Holy Communion, and yet many would expect any and all people

COMMUNION

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teaches us that the church will have hypocrites who inhabit and serve her. There is no way to tell who is a true member and who is not, unless they have the integrity to actually put their theology on the table for discussion. The fact is we cannot see faith; we can only go by what is confessed with the mouth or where the membership is held (each denomination has a confession of what it believes, teaches and confesses). If they want to commune while belonging to a different confession of faith, they either disagree with the teachings of their church or they are playing the hypocrite at the communion rail. To be a hypocrite is to “play-act.” Here, they are play-acting as if they agree with the teachings of the church in which they are going to commune.

If you join a church at the communion rail that does not confess the truth of God’s Word, you are saying and confessing that you actually agree with them and not with the church you belong to; or you are only “play-acting” so as not to have to make a statement of your faith that is true from God’s Word.

The same is true if we allow those of a different confession of faith to come and commune at our table. We are allowing them to be hypocrites, and we also would be hypocritical because we cannot have two confessions of faith (one true and one false).

As Rom. 16:17 reads:

“I appeal to you, brothers, to



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watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.”

In order to understand all of this better, we need to start with the Fifth Chief Part of the catechism, the Office of the Keys. In John 20, Jesus tells the apostles to forgive and retain sins. Any pastor who will not take this responsibility seriously should be removed from the Office of the Holy Ministry, for he is saying that he is willing to do “harm” to souls. In 1 Cor. 11:29, we hear that people can take the Lord’s Supper to their “harm.” The King James translation says “damnation”; other versions say “judgment” and “condemnation.” A loving congregation and pastor would not want anyone to take

this Means of Grace to their “harm.”

When a person comes to the altar to receive communion, they are individually receiving the forgiveness of sins, which should never be said and proclaimed to someone who denies the truth, either by their membership and confession of another church body or as a hypocrite within the church. When the pastor communes someone who he knows does this “play-acting,” he is confirming them in their error. The church and the pastor — who is speaking “in the stead and the command” of Christ — are breaking the Second Commandment and are putting the soul at risk, for they are lying with God’s name and Word.

In summary, we should commune only with those with whom we share a confession of faith. We can’t see the faith of others, so all we can go by is their confession of faith with their mouth and the church that they claim to belong to.

May we repent of our weakness in our understanding and practice of closed communion and come to the Lord’s Table to receive what Christ has promised — the forgiveness of sins. For where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation.

What a joy it is to come to the Lord’s Table and have our bodily senses tell us that we have received what Christ has promised. Our eyes see, our noses smell, our lips feel, our tongues taste and our ears hear that we have received what Christ promised: the forgiveness of sins, for life and salvation.

Camp season wrap up

Shepherd’s Hill at the Crossroads is wrapping up the summer camp season. The Past Staff reunion is scheduled for Aug. 16-18 for anyone who has served as staff at Shepherd’s Hill over the past 24 years. Thank you to everyone that helped in making this summer a success!

There are retreats coming up this fall and winter. Check them out at shretreat.org or facebook.com/shretreat.

Send an email to news@shretreat.org to be added to the e-newsletter list.

Rev. Jon Bonine, Executive Director • director@shretreat.org

Pastors: Looking for a biblical sermon hymn?

I wrote three hymnbooks using Scripture from each Sunday’s readings ... Series A, B and C, with Series A and C including extra hymns and texts from Psalms, Proverbs and favorite Scripture pastors like to use when preaching outside the pericopes.

The cost is \$10 plus \$2 shipping per book. The books can be viewed at my website — pastorlylekath.com. For more information, email me at ljekath@midco.net.

God’s peace and blessings to you and your ministry.

Rev. Lyle Kath

Associate Pastor, Immanuel, Wahpeton

INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Brian Shane was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Beautiful Savior, Fargo, on June 23. From left, Revs. Adam Harvala, Bernie Worral, Christopher Waldvogel, Chris Brademeyer, Shane, Steve Schulz, Howard Shane, Leo Deitemeyer, Arie Bertsch, Clark Jahnke and David Suelzle.



Rev. Philip Beyersdorf was installed as Pastor of St. Mark's, Minot, on June 9. From left, Revs. Dr. Matthew Richard, Daryl Rothchild, Nathan Schieber, Beyersdorf, Arie Bertsch, Josh Reimche, Scott Ramey and Tim Stout.



DCE Susanna Danner was installed as director of Christian Education at Immanuel, Fargo, on June 23. From left, Rev. Arie Bertsch, district president; Danner; Rev. Steve Schulz, Immanuel associate pastor; and Rev. Bernie Worral, Immanuel senior pastor.



Celebrate with Zion!

Zion, rural Claire City, S.D., celebrated its 125th anniversary as a congregation on June 16. Rev. Arie Bertsch, North Dakota District president, was the guest preacher. From left, Revs. Bertsch, Larry Johnson, Larry Harvala and Paul Warnier.

MISSION UPDATE

Blessings in Chile

Since 2015, our North Dakota District has been in partnership with the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile. The district convention voted to provide \$25,000 a year to support the Maule Region Mission, located in Constitucion and Talca, along with their missionaries, Revs. Adrian Ventura and Omar Kinas, who is also president of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile.

In May 2018, Rev. Arie Bertsch and Tami Ulland were in Chile to see what our mission dollars are achieving

and to attend a FORO (Spanish for “forum”), a system of support used for LCMS missions and sister churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Arie also joined in a couple of worship services. Arie and Tami are available to talk about our Chile missions at your church. Call either office to set up a time and date.

Congregational giving was very strong at the end of the 2018 fiscal year. In April, the district Board of Directors voted to pay the remaining \$18,779 of the \$25,000 obligation for 2018.



Rev. Omar Kinas, shown here comforting a child, is president of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile.



Fall Retreat

Sept. 20-22
Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads

Come join your fellow sisters in Christ for a truly reflective and restorative retreat experience.

Enjoy a peace-filled time of spiritual growth in the beautiful backdrop of the Turtle Mountains, aglow in gorgeous fall foliage. Renew old friendships and make new friends while learning what God's Word has for us as we persevere and pray through life's challenges.

The speaker is Donna Pyle. The luncheon speaker is Dr. Becky Grossmann of Lutheran Bible Translators.

Activities include Bible study, campfire and fireside devotions, fellowship, a prayer walk, personal reflection time, and many outdoor activities.

Register at ndlwml.org/retreat or call Kim at 701-320-0493. All women are welcome to attend.



Donna Pyle

District life news

Rev. Matthew Tooman

District Life Coordinator
701-899-1976 • looktoxp@reagan.com

- ▶ The Board of Elders of Immanuel, Wahpeton, has given its pastor, Rev. Matthew Tooman, North Dakota District Life coordinator, three Sundays per year to help district congregations with life advocacy. If your congregation is sponsoring a life event and would like Pastor Tooman to teach and/or

share a sermon and/or a teaching time at the church or in the community, contact him. Please try to schedule the event as far in advance as possible.

- ▶ The North Dakota District will receive fetal models from Lutherans For Life. If you would like to use these models, please contact Pastor Tooman. These are great visual and tactile tools to teach about life in the womb.
- ▶ As always, if you have a community event you would like to promote, please contact the district office at fargoofficendlems@gmail.com or 701-293-9001, or contact Pastor Tooman.

Need help with church records?



Is your church overflowing with papers and materials from the past 125 years? What should be kept and what should be sent to our archive at the district office in Fargo? There is a website that can help you with what to do with your records. Visit concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/category/information-sheets, which has useful information on a variety of topics.

There are many files here in the district vault that contain no historical information. Some have information written in German (anyone read German?). Others have pictorial directories from past years and anniversary booklets.

This fall, there will be a carload of information taken down from the district office to Concordia Historical Institute, located at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Please check with Vicki on what is needed. Contact her at the district office at 701-293-9001 Monday through Thursday, or at fargoofficendlems@gmail.com.