



DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA

Transfiguration

The Bible records a lot of big things happening on high mountains. Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat, and there God promised never again to flood the entire earth. Abraham and his son, Isaac, climbed a hill, where God provided a sacrifice. Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments.



Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President

If you haven't already, you will hear the account of the Mount of Transfiguration. A big thing happens — Jesus is transfigured and His clothes become radiant. It shows that He is not just another man. Yes, He is fully human, but He's also fully God. Before Peter, James and John, Jesus gives them a brief glimpse of His heavenly, divine glory.

Another big thing that happened at the Transfiguration was the appearance of Moses and Elijah. We know from the Gospel of Luke that they're talking about Jesus' exodus from this earth and His work. These greatest of prophets from the Old Testament are there to point again to Jesus, as they had done so many years earlier. Peter, James and John witness that Jesus is more than just another prophet: He's the Messiah, whom the prophets foretold was coming.

That's not all: God the Father overshadows them in a cloud and speaks:

“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” — **Luke 9:35**

In a glorious and thunderous way, that complements Jesus' radiant appearance. God declares that Jesus is His beloved Son, sent by the Father to do the Father's will of salvation. Peter, James and John get a glimpse of heavenly glory. They have normally seen Jesus as an ordinary and humble human being going about His work. But here, for a brief time, they see Him glorious as He will soon be sitting gloriously on the throne in heaven. It's only a glimpse though. Glory like this is the stuff of holy heaven, not sinful earth. God the Father recedes and the prophets disappear, leaving only the very ordinary-looking human Jesus standing in front of three bewildered disciples.

You've heard God's Word on this. Now we must ask the question: “So what?” Why is Jesus transformed? Why then? And why in front of Peter, James and John?

We don't know all of the reasons; but we do know some. Jesus had already begun to tell the disciples that He is going to save the world, not by a glorious triumph, but by His death on the cross.

His enemies have already begun to plot His death, and He is on His way to be crucified. Before Peter, James and John



see Him on the cross as the weakest and most condemned man on earth, they see Him transfigured and divine.

But it's a brief glimpse of Jesus' heavenly glory. From here the disciples will see Jesus rejected, arrested, tried and crucified, with no glory to be seen. They'll see Him risen from the dead, and they'll watch Him ascend into heaven. But there is no more radiant, intense and dazzling white that the Scriptures record for us. After He's ascended, they'll go and proclaim the Gospel. Yes, the Church will grow as people are baptized and instructed — just as it does today. In the meantime, the disciples will face setbacks, suffering and even death themselves.

Life on this sinful earth will be like it always is: No heavenly glory, but labor

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TRANSFIGURATION

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and trouble — and yet hope. Why hope? Because of what the Father said at the Transfiguration: **“This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.”** Long after the glory is disappeared, the disciples will still have Jesus’ Word. Even though they won’t see more glory in this world, they have God’s Word that heaven is theirs. They have God’s Word that they’ll see His glory again.

Well and good it was for Peter, James and John; but once again we must ask, “So what?” So what does this mean for you and me?

To answer that question, remember that the disciples had the joy of witnessing Jesus’ glory at the Transfiguration before proclaiming it. You weren’t on the mountain that day, and you don’t get to see Jesus’ dazzling glory on this side of heaven unless He returns soon. But you have something better — you have Jesus’ Word. Although you haven’t seen the Transfiguration with your eyes, you’ve heard the Transfiguration with your ears.

There are two basic ways to do theology — either a theology of glory or a theology of the cross. If you’re into a theology of glory, you go by what you see. You go by what you feel. You look for God in glorious things on earth, like beautiful sunsets, good health and exciting experiences. That is when worship is only about excitement and motivation.

If you’re into a theology of the cross, you operate differently. You see the cross in a different light. At the cross, the Lord won salvation even though it didn’t look glorious. His power and glory were hidden under suffering and death. You trust that Jesus’ death is your salvation not because it looked good, but because you hear in



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His Word that it was there that Christ saved you. Hearing His Word, you don’t look for God to act in glorious ways. You look for God to work in ways in which His glory is hidden, such as at the cross. Also consider Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. They don’t look glorious, but those are Sacraments in which God gives you

forgiveness for all of your sins. It may not feel exciting, but there is forgiveness, life and salvation.

So as Christians in this world, as theologians of the cross, dear people don’t go on with your eyes. Even at the Transfiguration, God the Father said, **“Listen to Him!”** not “See Him” nor “Look at the under-shepherd I have sent you.” Trust the Lord’s Word in spite of who brings it or who or what you see. Simply know that the Lord has plans for you — plans for a future and a hope.

And frankly, there will be times each day when you fail to live under the cross, when you give into this temptation or that one, when you cling to false glories of the world rather than God’s grace, when you fail to speak grace to your family, when you despair instead of rejoice. It will be no different as long as you’re in this inglorious world. But repent, and rejoice that you are not forsaken. The glorious Son of God became flesh in this world to deliver you to heaven. In that flesh and blood He went to another mountain — Mount Calvary — to make payment for your sin.

You don’t see His glory, but you hear of His grace as you listen and hear His Word. For now, you live by faith on earth by what you hear and not by what you see or who you see, but who you will see in heaven: You will see your Savior face-to-face and join all those who have gone before you in the faith. In other words, please remain listening to Jesus so that we will all be transfigured from our lowly bodies to a glorious body because of Jesus, who has forgiven you all your sins so that you have life and salvation (already now) by the Word you have heard, no matter whose mouth it has come from.

I look forward to seeing you in heaven, if not before.



Send submissions
for the district
supplement to

Marie Johnson at
news@nodaklcms.org

Helpful services available

Consider the services available from members of the North Dakota District. Do you provide a service that you would like to advertise in the eNews? Contact Marie at news@nodaklcms.org.

Have a book which needs repairing? Want to have something printed and bound? Contact Rev. Zelwyn Heide at zelwyn.heide@gmail.com.



More than 45 men attended the annual Men's Winter Retreat Jan. 25-26 at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads.

Camp Season is coming! Are you ready?

Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads is already preparing for the camp season! We are looking for summer staff who help make everything happen — young men and women, 18 years and older, who want to make an impact in the lives of kids of all ages. If you know someone who would be interested in working at camp, have them contact Shepherd's Hill and we can put them on the path to a summer they won't ever forget.

Speaking of summer, our camp registration will open soon! Brochures will be mailed to all congregations and past campers. If you would like a copy, let us know and we will include you in that mailing. You can register either by mail or online at shretreat.org. This summer, our theme will be "A Cloud of Witnesses" from Heb. 12:1-2. From the testimony of Scripture and the gathering of the saints to the Lord's Table, we are surrounded by a great cloud of saints.

In January, more than 45 men gathered for their annual Winter Retreat. Rev. Dan Suelzle, pastor of Wittenberg Chapel, Grand Forks, was the presenter. While it was cold outside, everyone enjoyed the opportunity to gather and engage in God's Word.

We have other events scheduled for this spring, including a Women's Retreat and our annual Spring Clean up and Lumberjack Days. Check out [facebook.com/SHRetreat](https://www.facebook.com/SHRetreat) for more details. If you would like to be included in the email newsletter updates, please send a request to news@shretreat.org to be added to that list. A fuller update will be sent out monthly to anyone who signs up.

The Board of Directors invites you to attend the Shepherd's Hill annual meeting, scheduled for 1 p.m. on Saturday, March 9. Come and find out more about the work being done at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads. If you would like, join us for lunch before the meeting.

Rev. Jon Bonine, executive director
director@shretreat.org
shretreat.org | [Facebook.com/shretreat](https://www.facebook.com/shretreat)

HEADED FOR LIBERIA



A loading day was held Jan. 25 at the Orphan Grain Train branch in Jamestown. Various items were loaded into a shipping container heading for Liberia, including more than 170,000 Mercy Meals, books, school supplies, desks and clothing. Praise the Lord for the work being done through Orphan Grain Train. For more information, visit ogt.org/branches/north-dakota.

Sign up for newsletter



If you are interested in receiving a periodical newsletter about the mission work in Watford City and western North Dakota, contact Rev. Zelwyn Heide at pastor@badlands.lutheran.org and you will be added to the list. For more information, visit badlandslutheran.org.

YOUTH EVENTS



Held every three years since 1980, the **LCMS Youth Gathering** provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to learn more about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity.

During the five days of the Gathering, youth spend time together in God's Word, worship, service and fellowship with others from across the Synod. This event is organized by LCMS Youth Ministry.

District coordinator

Pat Sebastian (Bethel, Bismarck) is serving as district coordinator for the Youth Gathering. She is arranging

transportation options; coordinating housing, a district event and district booth; and providing training to adult leaders among other responsibilities. Contact Pat at patsebbis@aol.com, or 701-281-1381 or 701-471-3289 with any questions or concerns.

You can still register!

After March 1, participants will be admitted to the Gathering on a space-available



basis for the late registration fee of \$400. The fee covers all Gathering programs and LCMS Office of National Mission Youth Ministry administrative costs; participant items like the Gathering Bible, backpack and post-Gathering resources; and secondary insurance for all participants. Hotel, travel and meal costs are not included in the registration fee. Estimated cost for the entire trip is \$1,000 to \$1,200.

Registration materials and tons of other information including adult leader resource-

es and Bible study resources can be found at lmsgathering.com.

Auditions due April 22

The LCMS Youth Gathering will conclude with the Divine Service. More than 20,000 people will join in worshipping our God and Savior. Youth have an opportunity to be involved in sharing their artistic gifts and talents through participating in the Gathering Choir or Wind Symphony.

All applications and audition videos must be submitted online by April 22. Applicants will be notified by May 22 of their selection. Members of the choir and wind symphony will receive the material necessary for the music to be learned in advance of the Gathering.

Visit [facebook.com/northdakotadistrictlyf](https://www.facebook.com/northdakotadistrictlyf) — for upcoming announcements!



The mission of Higher Things is to assist parents, pastors, and congregations in cultivating a distinctively Lutheran identity among their youth and young adults.

2019 CONFERENCES

March 29-30

Slaying the Monster of Uncertainty

• St. Paul's, Minot

Rev. Dr. Matthew Richard, St. Paul's pastor and author of the book "Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up: 12 False Christs," will share about the Christian's battle with the "Monster of Uncertainty." He will share who this monster is and its tactics. And most importantly, he will share how this monster is slain by the assurance the Christian has in the sure foundation of Jesus.

The Great Commission

• Zion, Gwinner

The way The Great Commission is normally told in America is: "You have to go and make disciples. If you don't, who will? And you must use any and all means necessary to win them for me." But is this really what Jesus says? **Rev. Daniel Voth**, associate pastor of Immanuel, Grand Forks, will explore the topic from a Lutheran perspective, helping attendees gain new insights on Christ, His Church and the Sacraments.

The cost of the retreat is \$50, which covers all expenses, including classes, food, activities and lodging at the church. For more information, contact Tana McKenna at retreats@higherthings.org; or (St. Paul's) Rev. Richard at 701-852-2821 or st.paulsrev@srt.com; or (Zion) Rev. Aaron Filipek at 701-680-3837 or pastor@zionwinner.org. Register online at higherthings.org/retreats.