

President's Address –July 2009

“Born Again to a living hope” is our theme. What does this mean for us who are part of the Central Illinois District of the LCMS? In Baptism God calls us to be His own. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit moves and motivates us to discover that we are pilgrims on a journey to heaven. We are not homeless people with nowhere to go. We are pilgrims on a journey to heaven.

Baptism is God's act. In Baptism God takes the sinful person and draws him into the very life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This brings us a life of hope which is God's gift to each of us. We know that God has promised to all believers in Christ the crown of glory. Such a hope motivates our journey through life.

The Central Illinois District is a part of the LCMS. Our church body has divided itself into 35 districts. Our district consists of 156 congregations and several preaching stations. Our district continues to be a beacon of confessional Lutheranism. We have also been a strong supporter of missions here at home and throughout the world. For this we are truly thankful. God has been good and blessed our efforts. I would like to share with you briefly some of the blessings of our work together. You will also hear from my assistants who will speak about their specific responsibilities.

My great love in kingdom work has been evangelism. I am concerned that as many people as possible hear about what Jesus did for us as sinners. I have been involved in OAFM for many years and involved in district evangelism. As I traveled around the district visiting various congregations, I found that people would get excited about evangelism when I would lead them in Bible study. Upon the urging of a number of people, I wrote a little pamphlet called “Me, An Instrument of God?” I have a few copies with me and we could run many more copies if anyone is

interested. (Let Marsha know if you would like a copy.) This is used in Evangelism classes at the Ft. Wayne Seminary.

In this pamphlet I suggest ways that the ordinary person can do outreach where they are. I will share a few of these stories with you. (Share 3 stories and mention a chapter on delinquents.) A few years ago I was surprised and thankful that our district received the award for the most baptisms in Synod. I even had a phone call from Dr. Dean Wenthe (a native of CID) congratulating our district for this. Pastor Cluver and his Commission have been very active promoting a number of ways to do outreach. We are in the beginning stages of revitalizing congregations (a bit different from what the Synod is promoting). We have a Great Commission Convocation planned for Nov. 7 in Bloomington featuring Dr. Wallace Schulz.

You do not hear me say much about “Ablaze!”, the Synodical evangelism movement. The reason for that is it is awkward to write and say. Having been a volunteer firefighter, this word has a different meaning for me. It also brings to mind such things as St. John's, Geneseo which was Ablaze the end of March, St. Luke, San Jose, and other of our congregations who have experienced fire in their house of worship. I just continue to “Tell the Good News about Jesus” because that is exactly what we should be doing. I encourage you to do the same.

Our district over the years has been a strong financial and prayer supporter of missions. The Synod provides educational opportunities to train church workers. We will hear more about that during the course of our convention. Mission work around the world is accomplished with the gifts of God's people through our Synod. In addition, we were encouraged to partner with a church body that is in fellowship with us in another country. We have done this with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

(ELCL). I try to visit Latvia once a year to encourage them in their faithfulness. They reciprocate. July 24-26 my wife and I plan to be in Latvia for their Church Days which is held every 3 years. Their whole church body is encouraged to attend. Many camp out for the weekend, others stay in hotels. Workshops, worship, fellowship, and food are the main ingredients for these special days. Three years ago it rained all day Saturday, but that did not dampen the spirits of these people. I was invited to participate in the consecration of two bishops in Latvia on Oct. 13, 2007.

In the area of Congregational Life and Stewardship, we have held a number of visitations to share with the district the work that is being done to spread the Gospel. We have had officer workshops which had been requested by many congregations. Pastor Reimnitz continues to focus on these areas of service in his work.

Mr. Glenn Goeres does a fine job of working with our Lutheran Day Schools, High Schools, Preschools, and Sunday Schools. He also works closely with me in keeping track of our district's Commissioned Workers.

Since July 11, 2003, I have been serving as interim business manager and have had the privilege of working with the Commission of Finance and Management. I cannot give sufficient thanks to John Rodenburg who has spent countless hours getting our district finances in order. Serving as the District Treasurer for the past 6 years, he has gone above and beyond the call of duty and we owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his service. I regret the fact that he has reached the limit of terms and will not be able to continue in this position. (Present plague) During the time we had a regular business manager and a bookkeeper, the treasurer's job was not very time consuming. Thank you John.

We have made some cuts in staffing over the past few years. At one time we had 2.5 secretaries and 6 or 7 other staff. Now we are down to 1 secretary, 1 part-time bookkeeper, and 5 executive staff. I am truly thankful for the wonderful staff we have. I would never have dreamed 10.5 years ago when we hired Mrs. Marsha Shown, that she would be our only secretary, keeping up with the 5 staff members. Kim Randall, our part-time bookkeeper, is also a big help to us. With each of us having our computers, it is not as critical to each have a personal secretary, especially when we have such a good one. I believe I am the only District President without an "Executive Assistant". I am thankful for the Board of Directors of the past triennium. It has been a joy to work together. Also I want to thank Vice President Pritchard and Vice President Bishop who have worked with me and given me advice along the way.

I am thankful for a loving family with which the Lord has blessed me. My wife Charlotte and I just a week ago today celebrated 46 years of marriage. I have completed 41 years in the ministry. We have been blessed with 5 children (all of them actively involved in the work of the Lord in the LCMS, with 4 of them as rostered workers). We have been blessed with 17 grandchildren, 18 if you include the husband of our oldest granddaughter I married last summer. I thank you for your support, your prayers, and your service in telling those around you how Jesus suffered, died, and rose again so that we might have the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of eternal life with Jesus. We have been "Born again to a living hope!" Let us share that great news with those around us.

Just a few minutes ago you voted to have me to continue to serve as your District President. I am grateful for your confidence and pledge to do the best of my ability as the Lord gives me strength and health. I would ask that you pray (as I do) that the Lord will lead me and guide me in all I do. As we work together in the next 3 years, may our focus be on Reaching the Lost, Revitalizing our congregations, and Revealing to all the joy we have because of being “Born Again to a living hope.”