

Central Illinois District Convention Report

July 8-10, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What a joy and a privilege to serve as your District President. We have a wonderful staff with which to work. Everyone in the office has the desire to work together to accomplish many things to help extend the kingdom of our Lord as we share the Good News of Jesus.

The theme for our convention, "Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone," points to the fact that everything we do as a church body and as a district is to be based upon God's Word. That word tells us that we are saved not by what we do, but solely by the grace of God. We are totally dependent upon the death and resurrection of Christ to pay the penalty for our sins. We receive this gift of God through faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us this in plain language, "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*"

All of us are born into the darkness of sin. We became children of darkness through the fall of Adam and Eve. Through our baptism God has made us His own and washes us clean through the blood of Christ. All of this has been done purely by the grace of God, not because of any good in us.

It is exciting to share the Good News with others. That is the main purpose of our district and synod. We do this in a variety of ways. We are always looking for places where we can establish a new outpost. About a year and a half ago we started a mission in Monticello. After seven months this mission had its Charter Sunday with about 90 members. They have outgrown their facility and are in the process of moving to a new location. Are there more places where we can work?

In the past years we have been involved in visioning and revitalization, helping congregations focus on how they can better serve the Lord with the resources they have at their disposal. We look at ways the congregation can reach out into the community they serve. Obviously this is not a magic wand which always works, but it does help to look at where we are going and where we have been.

Thankful for Staff Which is Decreased By One

This past year we bid farewell to Rev. Wesley Reimnitz, a long time assistant in the service of the Central Illinois District. After nineteen years serving as assistant to the president in the area of Congregational Life and Stewardship, he was led by the Holy Spirit to accept a call to be Pastor of St. Paul, Havana. We are thankful for his time with us and pray God's continued blessings in his ministry. With his departure, and with the reduction in district finances, it was decided to divide his responsibilities among the three remaining staff members. With better use of modern day technology, adjusting the way we get things done, and with good volunteers to assist in a number of areas, we have been able to continue the work. It would be nice to have another executive, but the question is can we afford it with today's economy? The remaining staff is satisfied with the present arrangement and work well together to maintain services to the district. In the next triennium the district board of directors will need to take a look a future staffing as everyone is getting closer to retirement age.

Our current office staff includes a full time district president, two full time assistants to the president (Rev. Cluver and Mr. Goeres), a full time administrative assistant (Marsha Shown), a part-time bookkeeper (Hugh Shown), and a part-time Gift Planning Counselor (Dave Rohe).

Thankful For Praesidium & Circuit Counselors

I am very grateful for our two vice presidents who are always ready and able to assist. Rev. Donald Pritchard has served well as 1st vice president the past two terms and Rev. Mark Miller, currently serving as 2nd vice president, has been an asset to the Praesidium. In addition, I truly appreciate the hard work of our 17 Circuit Counselors. It is obvious that I cannot be everywhere at once. These faithful servants work closely with the pastors and congregations in their circuit. They keep me informed and ask for my assistance when necessary. We work together when congregations are calling a pastor and when there are difficulties in a parish. I am very grateful to the congregations who allow their pastors to serve as Circuit Counselor and Vice President of the district since these responsibilities do take them away from their parish duties at various times.

Duties of District President

In looking over the activities of the past triennium, it reminds me of the many meetings and activities in which I am involved. I presided at 40 installations and/or ordinations the past three years, preaching at 12 of them. I met with numerous congregations in preparing them to call another pastor, to work on difficult issues, and discuss a variety of items including school issues. I was invited to preach and participate at many special anniversaries of pastors and congregations (37). There were 20 meetings of our district board of directors this past triennium and 24 meetings of the Council of Presidents, 12 regular meetings and 12 subcommittee meetings. The opportunity was given me to speak at 23 Lutheran Laymen League and Lutheran Women Missionary League meetings. I conducted many worship services during the past 3 years, including supervising the vicar at Risen Savior in Buffalo until July 2010, and assisting in other congregations as the need presented itself. There were 12 pre-seminary interviews during this time. In addition there were numerous meetings with pastors in the district, some from other districts, and some of the ELCA who were contemplating colloquy into the LCMS. We attempt to meet monthly as a staff to coordinate our efforts. I have also been working with Rev. Cluver on revitalization weekends (7). The first and second Tuesdays each month (September-May), I try to meet with the various circuit gatherings. In addition I was invited to do chapels at some of our Lutheran High Schools and grade schools.

Some of the special events in which I participated included the July 2010 Synodical Convention in Houston, TX; the 2009 LWML Convention in Portland; the 2011 LWML Convention held in Peoria; and the 40th Anniversary of the Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ in which I had served as executive director some time ago. My wife and I attended Church Days in July 2009 in Latvia and in April 2010 I attended the consecration of a bishop in Latvia. I was privileged to preach at the vicarage service at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in April 2010 since our son Kevin was one of the vicars being placed. I have also been asked by President Harrison to serve and lead the Wittenberg Project cabinet. The purpose of this group is to help get the development of the Project going forward. Since our CID Church Extension Fund

provided the funding for the building in Wittenberg, the plan is to develop it into a facility for furthering education for students and adults, as well as a welcoming center for those who come to Germany for a visit.

The duties of the district president include keeping records on all the rostered ordained and commissioned workers of the district and sending in forms to Synod's Rosters and Statistics department. You can see this reporting in the following pages. Mr. Goeres handles the commissioned workers for me. It is also my responsibility to update pastors' "Pastor's Information Form" (PIF) and encourage pastors to update their "Self Evaluation Form" (SET) periodically. All other districts have an administrative assistant to do this, but we do not. Up until six years ago Mr. Goeres and I shared an administrative assistant to do much of this work.

In addition, for the past nine years we have not had a business manager. Thus I have had the responsibility to approve expenditures, write checks, oversee the CID finances, close on purchases of property, file paperwork to remove properties from the tax rolls, update insurance, and meet with the Finance & Management Commission to seek their advance and direction. I do this in cooperation with the district treasurer and our part-time bookkeeper.

For four years I was asked to supervise the work of a vicar at our mission in Buffalo, which I enjoyed doing. It is a privilege to be a part of training future pastors. Three of the four vicars have been ordained and are serving our Synod faithfully. The other was not certified for ministry, but is serving as pastor at independent congregations.

What a joy and a blessing to be able to serve such a wonderful district of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. I am thankful for the opportunity and thankful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has given me the strength, health, and ability to carry on this work. I am also very grateful for a wonderful wife of 49 years, Charlotte, who is a very faithful helpmeet and encourager as we together serve the Lord. It is also such a blessing to have the faithful pastors and commissioned workers who help to make the work of the President's Office easier, who remain faithful in proclaiming God's Word in its truth and purity and following the Lutheran Confessions. It is also a joy to work with the faithful members of our 156 congregations.

I would encourage all of us in the Central Illinois District of the LCMS to regularly pray for our churches, our officers, our ordained and commissioned workers, our district and synodical officers, and for the lay members of our congregations that together we can do the work of the Lord in our place. We pray that we can continue to be faithful in telling the Good News about Jesus and reaching out to those who do not know Jesus as their Savior. We have been given the tools we need, "Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, and Sola Fide." Let us then use the Word and proclaim the fact that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. David Buelmann, President of the Central Illinois District