

MINISTRY READINESS STUDY REPORT

Central Illinois District – LCMS

Bring Giving Home . . . but it doesn't stay at home!

INTRODUCTION

Jesus our Lord was “rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Now, that hits home!

Christ brings giving home to you and to your church. The Central Illinois District 2019 Stewardship and Mission education emphasis was “Bring Giving Home.”

Giving, once brought home, does not remain “at home.” It doesn't stay in “my own” congregation. Part of it can support the Lord's work elsewhere. Like the seed in His parable, the Lord's life-giving Word is to be sown widely – also in extraordinary places.

You have long-standing specialized missions in central Illinois. They include ministry in Spanish, deaf ministry, and campus ministry. Can Central Illinois District continue these? Do them well?

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

A two-pronged approach is proposed within a projected \$7 million campaign:

1. Providing for repair and upgrade needs at mission sites owned by Central Illinois District, as well as at the District office, for the next ten years. *Estimated cost: \$1.5 million*
2. Making provision for longer-range financial support through contributions to endowment funds for Central Illinois District Ministry in Spanish, Deaf Ministry, and Campus Ministries. All of these are aspects of God's mission – here, close at hand. *Estimated cost: \$5.5 million*

WHY IS THIS BEING PROPOSED?

Places

- Central Illinois District started *Ministry in Spanish* in East Moline in 2003. Rev. Pablo Dominguez has served as your District missionary and, since 2018, as the called pastor of Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church, making the Gospel available to 11,000 Spanish-speakers in the Quad Cities, or (as Cristo Rey puts it) “Planting the Gospel's Seed in the QC.” For over a decade, through Central Illinois District you have additionally supported ministry in Spanish at St. John Lutheran Church in Beardstown to serve some 1,850 Spanish-speaking people in that area.
- *Deaf Ministry* in Jacksonville began in 1901. Christ Lutheran Church for the Deaf was organized there in 1948. From 2005 to 2024, Pastor Thomas Phillips served as your Missionary to the Deaf in Central Illinois District. In 2015, a District-wide deaf parish was created to extend this ministry. Now named Central Illinois Lutheran Deaf Outreach, the parish involves members of Central Illinois District churches from places as far-flung as Bloomington and Danville. When Pastor Phillips left Central

Illinois District in late 2024, he was one of only three pastors to the deaf called by any of the 35 LCMS Districts.

- *Campus Ministry* is another specialized mission that Central Illinois District has sustained on your behalf. It pays salaries for two full-time campus pastors, at University of Illinois and at Illinois State, and it owns well-located churches on both campuses. Central Illinois District also owns a campus church a block away from Western Illinois and gives Immanuel Lutheran Church, Macomb funds for its pastor to serve half-time in campus ministry. Central Illinois District has no property in Charleston, but it helps support student leaders who work with the pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church – just across the street from Eastern Illinois. “What we need, and need badly, is preaching on the campus,” wrote Central Illinois District’s first full-time campus pastor in 1941. This District has never forgotten.
- *Central Illinois District office* in Springfield comprises two buildings. One provides office space plus chapel and meeting facilities for Central Illinois District’s President, two executives, and bookkeeper, also Church Extension Fund staff. The other houses the District archives and is the gathering place for Immanuel Lutheran Chapel, a Central Illinois District-supported new church start.

Prospects

- *Ministry in Spanish:* “I soon discovered,” Pastor Dominguez writes, “that the majority of Hispanics knew nothing about the Bible, nor did they attend church.” As one way to reach them, Cristo Rey broadcasts a Spanish program on KALA-FM, Davenport, which is heard by 4,000-5,000 listeners. “I heard the messages of Pastor Dominguez every Saturday on the radio. Later I started to go to Cristo Rey,” writes Ana. “I know I’m a sinner, but Jesus paid the price for me, and, thanks to Him, I have the assurance of eternal life. I’ll keep going to this church every Sunday...” Ana and others need a place of grace. Cristo Rey can continue to provide it, with your help.
- *Deaf Ministry:* This work’s “center of gravity” has been shifting. Before Pastor Phillips left, it was growing clear that being near the Illinois School for the Deaf no longer brings the advantages it once did. Central Illinois District plans to sell the deaf church building in Jacksonville and put the sale proceeds into the deaf parish’s endowment fund, to be matched by Lutheran Legacy Foundation. Central Illinois District deaf work will be conducted more and more through the district-wide parish, as a new pastor is assisted by two of its women who are about to enter deaconess training. By far, most deaf people are unchurched, yet Christ is for them too. Deaf ministry can help them, with your help.
- *Campus Ministry:* Are you concerned about sons or daughters of our congregations losing their faith at college? Think campus ministry. Pastor Heath Curtis of Worden, Illinois, Coordinator for National Synod Stewardship, says: “Campus ministry (at University Lutheran, Champaign) has had an immeasurable impact on my daughter. In a sea of unbelief, LCMS campus ministry gives our kids an island of community, support, and living faith. Across the country in my work with Synod Stewardship I tell people: the best bang for your mission buck today is campus ministry. Hands down!” Central Illinois District aims to keep Christ on campus, with your help.

Input was sought through personal interviews, a public survey, and group forum meetings.

- 40 surveys were completed online by representatives of congregations in the Central Illinois District.
- 310 surveys were completed online by individuals in the Central Illinois District.
- 350 total surveys were completed by representatives of 305 households.

REVIEW OF SURVEY RESPONSES

1. Respondents were asked about the value of the ministries of the Central Illinois District:

- Congregation Representative: 77.0% of respondents indicated *Ministry in Spanish* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 71.5% of respondents indicated *Ministry in Spanish* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.
- Congregation Representative: 69.2% of respondents indicated *Deaf Ministry* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 78.9% of respondents indicated *Deaf Ministry* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.
- Congregation Representative: 94.9% of respondents indicated *Campus Ministry* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 91.9% of respondents indicated *Campus Ministry* provides a valuable ministry in the Central Illinois District.

2. Respondents were asked about their awareness of the ministries provided by Central Illinois District:

- Congregation Representative: 61.5% of respondents indicated they are aware of the *Ministry in Spanish* provided by Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 37.7% of respondents indicated they are aware of the *Ministry in Spanish* provided by Central Illinois District.
- Congregation Representative: 61.5% of respondents indicated they are aware of the *Deaf Ministry* provided by Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 40.6% of respondents indicated they are aware of the *Deaf Ministry* provided by Central Illinois District.
- Congregation Representative: 74.3% of respondents indicated they are aware of the *Campus Ministry* provided by Central Illinois District.
- Individual: 71.6% of respondents indicated *Campus Ministry* provided by Central Illinois District.

4. Respondents were asked the need and timing for the following items:

- **Ministry in Spanish needs to repair and upgrade the church building in East Moline and build the congregation's endowment, which will help pay for future building and ministry needs.**

Congregation Representative:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| – There is a need: | 56.4% agreed | 38.5% neutral | 5.1% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 35.9% agreed | 56.4% neutral | 7.7% disagreed |

Individual:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| – There is a need: | 46.4% agreed | 45.7% neutral | 7.9% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 38.5% agreed | 51.3% neutral | 10.2% disagreed |

- **Deaf Ministry needs to build the endowment in order to help fund ministry efforts into the future.**

Congregation Representative:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| – There is a need: | 53.9% agreed | 35.9% neutral | 10.2% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 42.1% agreed | 42.1% neutral | 15.8% disagreed |

Individual:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| – There is a need: | 59.3% agreed | 37.8% neutral | 2.9% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 48.8% agreed | 47.8% neutral | 3.4% disagreed |

- **Campus Ministry needs to repair and upgrade three campus centers and build out their endowments for future ministry for all four sites.**

Congregation Representative:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| – There is a need: | 71.8% agreed | 23.1% neutral | 5.1% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 59.0% agreed | 33.3% neutral | 7.7% disagreed |

Individual:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| – There is a need: | 75.4% agreed | 21.0% neutral | 3.6% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 66.3% agreed | 29.1% neutral | 4.6% disagreed |

- **The Central Illinois District needs to update and renovate their office building.**

Congregation Representative:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| – There is a need: | 42.1% agreed | 44.7% neutral | 13.2% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 30.8% agreed | 53.8% neutral | 15.4% disagreed |

Individual:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| – There is a need: | 38.4% agreed | 50.3% neutral | 11.3% disagreed |
| – Now is the right time: | 33.3% agreed | 51.5% neutral | 15.2% disagreed |

Respondents were asked the following questions:

Which should be given highest priority?

Immediate repair and upgrades for the mission of Central Illinois District

Increasing the endowment for the missions of Central Illinois District

62.9% of congregation representatives believe the immediate repair and upgrades for the mission of Central Illinois District should be given a higher priority than increasing the endowment for the missions of Central Illinois District. 62.5% of individual respondents agreed.

Are you in favor of Central Illinois District completing immediate repairs and upgrades and increasing the endowment for the missions of the District?

63.2% of congregation representatives are in favor of Central Illinois District completing the immediate repairs and upgrades and increasing the endowment for the missions of Central Illinois District. 65.4% of individual respondents agreed.

I have had adequate opportunity to have my questions answered concerning the plan for Central Illinois District.

Many congregation representatives (69.2%) indicated they had been given adequate opportunity to have their questions answered concerning the plan for Central Illinois District as described. Only 39.7% of individual respondents agreed.

I will support the plan the majority supports, even if it is not my preferred plan.

76.9% of congregation representatives agreed to support a plan the majority supports, even if it is not their preferred plan, 2.6% disagreed. Many (66.0%) individual respondents agreed, only 5.6% disagreed.

Now is the right time to conduct a capital campaign to help fund the vision as described.

35.9% of congregation representatives indicated now is the right time to conduct a capital campaign to help fund the vision as described, 12.8% disagreed. 49.4% of individual respondents agreed, 12.5% disagreed.

I feel I know enough about this project to make an informed decision about my financial support.

Congregation representatives agreed (69.2%) they knew enough about this project to make an informed decision regarding their financial commitment, only 10.3% disagreed. 41.6% of individual respondents agreed, 26.2% disagreed.

Will your congregation contribute financially to a capital campaign to help fund this project?

33.4% of congregation representatives were willing to make a three-year financial commitment to a capital campaign, 53.3% were not sure, and 13.3% indicated they would not make a commitment.

Will your congregation contribute financially to a capital campaign to help fund this project?

29.9% of individual respondents were willing to make a three-year financial commitment to a capital campaign, 55.7% were not sure, and 14.4% indicated they would not make a commitment.

Preparing for a capital campaign requires clarity of mission and vision together with an alignment of resources to move people toward action. With that in mind, your Ministry Solutions Consultant provides some observations as well as recommendations based on information that was shared through surveys, personal interviews, and forums, together with conversations he has had with church leaders.

OBSERVATIONS

- There was strong participation for this process, with 350 surveys being completed and 40 of those being from congregational representatives.
- There is strong overall support and agreement behind the value these ministries provide, most of all *Campus Ministry*.
- The data confirmed a lack of awareness for the ministries provided by CID, especially *Ministry in Spanish* and *Deaf Ministry*. This lack of awareness was clear in both individuals and congregations, but especially pronounced with individual respondents.
- The data seems to show a clear priority order among the respondents for the four ministry needs:
 1. Campus Ministry
 2. Deaf Ministry
 3. Ministry in Spanish
 4. CID Office
- It was clear from the comments that many churches and schools within the district are struggling with meeting their own ministry needs, which may factor into both the congregations' and individuals' ability to give.
 - 33% of congregational respondents said they would make a three-year financial commitment, while 53% were unsure.
 - 30% of individuals said they would make a three-year financial commitment, while 56% were unsure.
- The current needs of Lutheran schools within the district came up several times in the comments.
- There are two donors who each indicated the potential to give \$1,000,000+ to a campaign.
- Based on our experience with capital campaigns such as this, with the combination of information presented in this study, we estimate the challenging but realistic goal for a three-year campaign conducted today is \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000 (with the potential for more dependent on increasing overall involvement as well as the size of contributions from a few key donors).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to raise awareness for the positive Kingdom work these ministries are doing (social media, emails, videos, banquets).
- Immediately follow up with the two individuals who marked \$1,000,000+ in their surveys (but also marked "not sure" if they would contribute financially).
- Consider including an initiative to support the needs of Lutheran schools within the district.
- Within a three-year capital campaign:
 - Prioritize the \$1.5 million in repair and upgrade needs at mission sites.
 - Use additional funds received to support the specialized missions of CID (endowments, special grant opportunities, etc.)

- Upon completion of the recommendations above, we endorse Central Illinois District moving forward with a three-year capital campaign with Ministry Solutions to secure funding for the vision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Much appreciation and special thanks to the Ministry Readiness Study Team for their outstanding leadership in fulfilling their tasks.
2. Ministry Solutions is again grateful to Central Illinois District's leadership for this opportunity to be of service, and we look forward to our continued partnership in ministry.