



# PEAKS AND VALLEYS

## DISTRICT NEWS

# Life together in worship

## *Welcoming those who have been absent*



KNOW THE TRUTH  
UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE  
LIVE THE FAITH

**By Rev. Roger Schlechte**

District President

Autumn ushers in a variety of new beginnings — students settle into the new school year, vacations are completed, work becomes more regularized.

Other activities and organizations that have been dormant during the summer emerge with new vigor.

Church life itself takes on a newness. Congregations transition to different worship schedules. New Bible classes offer opportunities for spiritual growth. Sunday school classes, if not held during the summer months, begin again. Confirmation classes start up.

After Labor Day, a spiritual awakening sometimes arises in individuals. This time of year happens to be when people may take interest in establishing, or re-establishing, connection with a church. Those who have been absent



from worship for a period of time return. Others venture out looking for a church for the first time in their lives. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we rejoice when this takes place!

While we desire and encourage church attendance for spiritual growth, the question remains as to how we might best bring about this end result as people venture into our sanctuaries. Pertinent questions for our reflection on this matter include: “How do we treat those who are first-time guests?” and “How do we greet those who have had a lengthy absence from worship?”

Is it possible to be too eager? Yes! Being too eager displays itself when the conversation is more about the church’s need for them than it is about the individuals themselves. If people sense that we are mostly concerned about our worship numbers and our need for their offerings and involvement, we can actually “turn people off.” It’s too fast, too soon!

Consider how you respond to someone who has been absent from church for a period of time. Statements such as “Where have you been?” or “It’s been a long time since we’ve

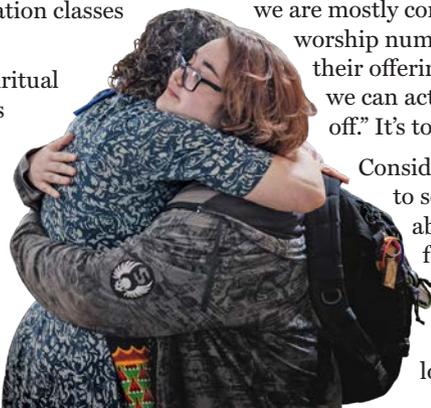
seen you!” might be seen as judgmental. It could also create embarrassment and cause them to not return in the future.

Rather, a warm reception that embraces them with genuine love and understanding will be received much better. Be interested in their welfare and what life has been like over the past months or years. Show empathy rather than judgment as you engage in conversation.

Remember the ultimate reason for which we encourage worship attendance. It is not for the sake of the local congregation, although that can be beneficial. It is for the sake of those coming into the worship space, that they might hear the beautiful truths of God’s words of love, forgiveness and the free gift of salvation. We pray that they will know the peace that comes from God, that they will be encouraged in their faith, and that they will be strengthened to be God’s people in their vocations.

Toward that end result, “Love your neighbor!”

**Pastor Schlechte**  
rschlechte@rm.lcms.org giant



### Pastors get help in transition to parish ministry



New pastors and their families enjoy a spaghetti luncheon provided by Messiah's LWML Guild.

Lutheran Church and School of Messiah, Grand Junction, Colo., hosted the Rocky Mountain District Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support

(PALS) group June 17-19. PALS helps to support pastors, their wives and families in making a successful transition from seminary life to parish ministry.

The theme was "Leading Positive Change in your Congregation." This conference provided curriculum and resources, and fellowship through a dinner and a trip to the salon for the wives.

Included in the group were six pastors, five wives and six children. Volunteer babysitting was provided by the youth from Messiah.

Gift bags from Enstrom Toffee were presented. Representatives from the LWML Rocky Mountain District greeted attendees and provided information about the LWML, encouraging the pastors and their wives to become involved with their local groups or start a new group in their congregation. A presentation was also given by LCEF.

## Retired educators meet in Parker

The Retired Rocky Mountain District Educators (RRMDE) held its second luncheon of 2019, at Lutheran High School in Parker, Colo., on June 20.

The topic for the day was "2019 & Beyond: The State of LCMS Early Childhood, Elementary, and High Schools." Presenters included Dan Gehrke, executive director, Colorado Lutheran High School Association; Rev. Paul Albers, district executive for Congregational Services; and Dr. Jonathan Laabs,

executive director, Lutheran Education Association (LEA).

Their informative presentations showed how LCMS schools at home and internationally are doing and what the future holds. Although the present has many sobering challenges for these LCMS schools, the future may bring new and promising growth with God's unforeseen blessings.

To encourage new educators, the LEA

created a "Growing a Teacher" initiative. This project will help cover costs for students in the Concordia University System and at Valparaiso University — who are preparing to become LCMS teachers — to attend the LEA Convocation in St. Louis in October.

Watch for announcements for the Sixth Annual Reformation RRMDE Luncheon, scheduled for Oct. 24.

Any retired LCMS educators living in the district who are not receiving invitations to the luncheons but would like to attend should email Nathan Eickmann at [eickmann@msn.com](mailto:eickmann@msn.com).

## Serving our district in Tampa

The Rocky Mountain District was represented by these delegates at the 67th Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod July 20-25 in Tampa. For information on the convention, visit [lcms.org/convention](http://lcms.org/convention).



## Help district LWML reach its mission goal

Apart from the national LWML mission goal, each district also sets mission goals and chooses mission-grant recipients. The LWML Rocky Mountain District's mission goal for the 2018-20 biennium is \$82,314.

How can you partner with us to reach this goal?

- ▶ Continue to pray daily for our mission grant recipients. Information about our grants is available at [lwmlrmd.org/missions](http://lwmlrmd.org/missions). Visit for updated information and learn how to send in donations at [lwmlrmd.org/treasurer](http://lwmlrmd.org/treasurer).
- ▶ Be involved. Share information about the LWML Rocky Mountain District and our mission grants. Bulletin inserts, mite calendars, updates and devotions are available for use on the website.
- ▶ Involve others in collecting mite offerings.
- ▶ Consider enrolling in the Joyful Response program from LCEF. You can set up scheduled donations to the LWML Rocky Mountain District, deducted directly from your bank account. This also supports the national LWML mite goal.
- ▶ Use AmazonSmile or GoodSearch to donate directly to national LWML.
- ▶ Consider enrolling in a new program for LWML called "Donate Your Change" (DYC). With DYC, you create a Roundup Giving account where you can choose to round up credit card purchases to the nearest dollar and donate the difference to the LWML. It acts like a digital mite box. The LWML Rocky Mountain District receives 20 percent of your donations.

Contact LWML Rocky Mountain District President Debbie Yocky at [president@lwmlrmd.org](mailto:president@lwmlrmd.org) for more information or if you have questions. She would be happy to talk with you or your congregation about the mission emphasis of the LWML.



A warm southern welcome from the 2019 host districts, Florida-Georgia, Gulf States and Louisiana-Mississippi, was extended to more than 3,000 women, men and visitors from across the nation and around the world at the LWML 38th Biennial Convention June 20-23 in Mobile, Ala.

"In Praise to the LORD!" was the theme, based on 1 Chron. 16:23-24a: "Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations.

The voting delegates approved the 2019-21 mission goal of \$2.1 million, selected 21 mission grants, approved proposed amendments to the LWML

#### Bylaws and elected officers:

- ▶ Debbie Larson, president
- ▶ Marie Chow, VP of Organizational Resources
- ▶ Deaconess Betty Knapp, VP of Special Focus Ministries
- ▶ Karla Koehler, treasurer
- ▶ Rev. Brian B. Noack, pastoral counselor

#### Nominating Committee

- ▶ Sylvia Bean
- ▶ Carrie Brumbaugh
- ▶ Mary Harrington
- ▶ Crystal Miller
- ▶ Brienne Stahlecker (chairman)

Larson and Bean are members of the LWML Rocky Mountain District.



Patti Ross places a pin on the Rocky Mountain District's Debbie Larson, who was elected new LWML president. Ross had served in the position since 2015.

# DISTRICT NEWS



**Rev. Josh Rusnak** was ordained at Family of Faith, Peyton, Colo., on June 16. He has been called by Rock of Ages, Colorado Springs, to serve as Family of Faith mission pastor. Participating in the service are, from left, Revs. Mark Moreno, Andy Becker, Jonathan Kern, Dennis Lucero, Rusnak, Gary Rahe, Dave Hall, James Maxwell, Ronald Baker and Douglas Brauner.



**Rev. Thaine Lee Kister** was installed as pastor of Christ The King, Los Lunas, and Hope, Socorro, N.M., on June 8 at Christ The King. Clergy attending are, from left, Revs. Edward Maas, Quintin Cundiff, Donald Neidigk, John Heffelfinger Jr., Marcus Zill, Kister, Rob Mueller, Warren Graff, Adam DeGroot, Douglas Escue and Brian Kachelmeier.

## DISTRICT CALLS/CHANGES

### Calls extended

- ▶ Immanuel/Immanuel, Loup City/Merna, Neb., to **Rev. Jason Krause**, Cross of Christ, Bountiful, Utah
- ▶ Resurrection in the City, Denver, to Rev. **Warren Maleug-Lattimore**, St. Paul NE, New Orleans

### Calls accepted

- ▶ **Anna Smith**, candidate status, Commerce City, Colo., to Zion, Brighton, Colo.
- ▶ **Emily Geisler**, candidate status, Fort Collins, Colo., to Immanuel, Albuquerque, N.M.

### Calls declined

- ▶ **The Rev. B. Keith Haney**, Northern Illinois District mission facilitator, from the Rocky Mountain District Board of Directors (for executive assistant).
- ▶ **Rev. Jerry Bagwell**, candidate status, Central Illinois District to Immanuel/Immanuel, Artesia /Carlsbad, N.M.
- ▶ **Katie Gerling**, St. John, Portage, Wis., to Peace with Christ, Aurora, Colo.

- ▶ **Rev. Bo Graham**, St. Paul, Mount Prospect, Ill., to Risen Savior, Broomfield, Colo.

### Change of status

- ▶ **Kevin Rhode**, Trinity, Fort Morgan, Colo., to candidate status

### Transfers

- ▶ **Martha Hischke**, candidate status, Brighton, Colo., South Wisconsin District to Rocky Mountain District



## November issue deadline: Sept. 16

### Send news to Jan Hoener:

- > [communications@rm.lcms.org](mailto:communications@rm.lcms.org)
- > 5446 Knoll Place, Highlands Ranch, CO 80130



The sound of joyous shouting to God was heard at Trinity, Cortez, Colo., as **Rev. Luke Scheele** was ordained and installed as pastor on July 6. Scheele received his Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in May. He is joined by his wife, Hope, and their four young children. Above, Pastor Scheele is installed by Rev. Rev. Roger Schlechte, Rocky Mountain District president.