



DISTRICT NEWS

OKLAHOMA



The Breaking of the Bread



Rev. Dr. David Nehrenz
District President

During the 50 days of Easter, Jesus is revealed in the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread. Jesus arose on Easter Sunday. For 40 days He gave convincing proofs that He was risen from the dead. He ascended into heaven on a Thursday. Then 10 days later, on a Sunday, the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost.

The Gospel lesson for the third Sunday of Easter is Luke 24:13-35. Two disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus. Jesus suddenly appeared walking alongside them. Jesus purposely hid His identity from them for a time. They were downcast about the death of Jesus, who began explaining that all of the Old Testament spoke about Him and His death and resurrection. He drew them into the words from Genesis to Malachi in the Old Testament.

In that lesson, Luke writes:

And Jesus said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his

glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Then the two disciples asked this stranger to come stay with them at the house.

Luke writes:

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Then suddenly Jesus appeared among them. They think He is a ghost and are initially in disbelief, while filled with joy and amazement. The risen Jesus stands among the disciples and shows them His hands and His feet, with the nail marks still there.

So Jesus asked them:

"Have you anything here to eat?"
They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

LUKE 24:41-43

Why did He do this? The disciples were startled, frightened, troubled and

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The Christ the Redeemer, Tulsa, Winter Youth Retreat was held Feb. 7–8 at Camp Lutherhoma. Led by Suzanne Watt (middle row, right), director of Christian Education, and Carri Cline (left), director of Family Ministry at Christ the Redeemer, youth participated in Bible study, outdoor games, a campfire and many more activities based on the theme “Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever,” based on Hebrews 13:8. Together the youth explored the connection between Old Testament and New Testament accounts and how Jesus can be found throughout Scripture. One unique aspect of this retreat is that youth in third through eighth grade attend as students while ninth through 12th graders attend as mentors and leaders.



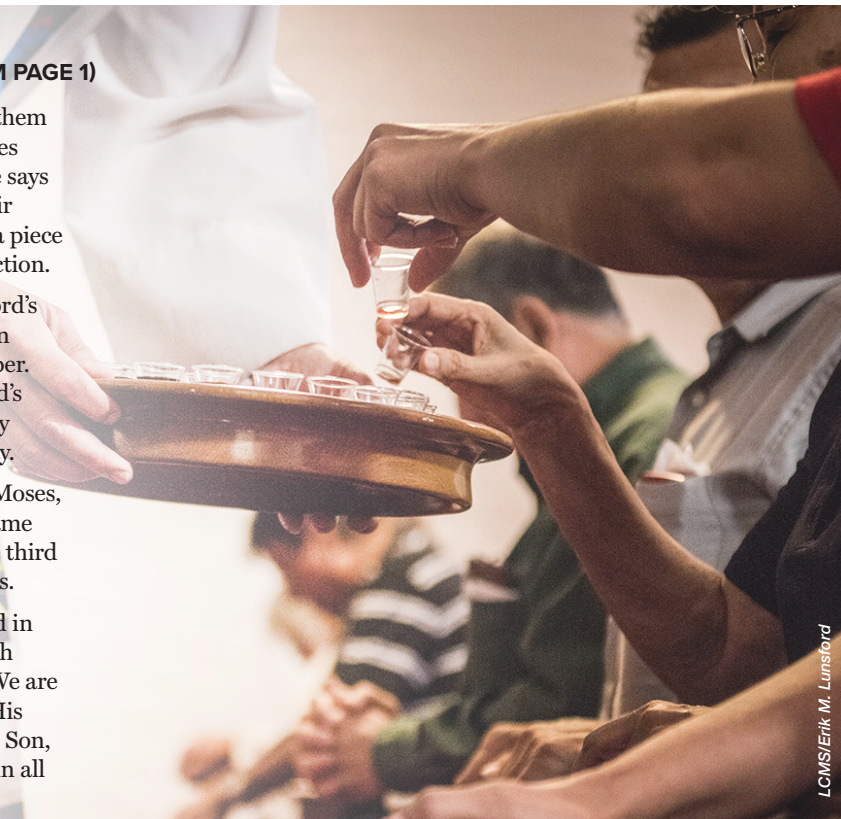
MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

doubted whether it was really Jesus. So Jesus tells them to look at Him, touch Him and see. “For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have,” He says (Luke 24:39). Jesus eats the broiled fish before their eyes. Amazing! A man standing there chewing on a piece of fish with His teeth is proof of His bodily resurrection.

The breaking of the bread is a connection to the Lord’s Supper. Jesus broke the bread in the upper room on Maundy Thursday as He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Now He is pointing to His real presence in the Lord’s Supper. He gives us His body and His blood in Holy Communion. This is where we recognize Him today.

This was all foretold in the Old Testament Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Jesus as the Christ came to suffer, be crucified and rise from the dead on the third day. The apostles were eye-witnesses of these things.

Now repentance and forgiveness of sins is preached in Jesus’ name to all nations. Jesus says, “Peace be with you!” to people of all nationalities and languages. We are at peace with God through the bloody sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross. Through faith in His Son, we have peace in our hearts. We see Him revealed in all the Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford



ABOVE: Rev. Dean Graumann was ordained and installed at St. John’s, Granite, on Feb. 1. Pastors from the Kingfisher, Lawton and Oklahoma City circuits, and Texas and Illinois participated. Alongside Rev. BJ Armstrong, Pastor Graumann will serve St. John’s; Faith, Altus; St. John’s, Lone Wolf; and Christ, Elk City. He had previously served the congregations as vicar.

Pictured are, from left, (front) Rev. Dr. Bill Schneider, Rev. Trinidad Castaneda, Rev. BJ Armstrong, Rev. Dean Graumann, Rev. Dr. David Nehrenz, Rev. Kyle Nelson, Rev. Ahren Reiter; (back) Rev. Wayne Graumann, Rev. Gary Piepkorn, Rev. Ronald Boelte, Rev. David Thompson, Lay Deacon Aaron Ausher and Rev. Bill Geis.

RIGHT: Aaron Ausher (right) was installed as Lay Deacon at Christ, Elk City, on Feb. 1 by Pastor Armstrong. Aaron’s work will focus on evangelism and community outreach.



Download convention Bible study

In preparation for the 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which will be held in Phoenix in July, a new Bible study that explores the convention theme, “Christ Is Risen Indeed,” is now available. The Bible study was written by the Rev. Timothy J. Pauls, pastor of Good Shepherd, Boise, Idaho.

This free, downloadable study begins by asking the question the angels asked the women at the tomb: “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5). It answers the question by exploring the truth of our Lord’s resurrection as laid out in 1 Corinthians 15: Jesus is not in the tomb because He is not dead! Each of the six lessons includes a short devotion along with Scripture study, a closing prayer and a suggested hymn.

Guides are available for both leaders and participants. You are invited to use this study in your congregations and groups as we join together as a church to proclaim that Christ is risen indeed.

Find Bible study materials at lcms.org/convention/bible-study.

CHRIST IS RISEN

..... INDEED

**69th Regular Convention of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

July 18–23

Phoenix Convention Center



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

By Rev. Daniel Ross

Oklahoma District Evangelism Executive

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Rev. Jeff Mueller, pastor of a church plant in Waikoloa Village, Hawaii. Pastor Mueller's congregation has become deeply involved in supporting a local elementary school and I wanted to learn from his experience.

My congregation in Mustang also supports a nearby elementary school. In my work in the district, I have found many congregations seek to build relationships with public schools, but those relationships can sometimes be complicated.

Not every school district is comfortable allowing formal church programs or official congregational involvement inside their building. Policies vary widely, and administrators must carefully navigate legal and community expectations. Rather than seeing these limitations as closed doors, I encourage you to view them as invitations to think creatively about how Christians can still serve.

After a productive conversation with Pastor Mueller, I came away encouraged and equipped with practical ideas that any congregation can consider. The essential insight was simple: even when a congregation as an organization cannot

formally enter a school, individual Christians almost always can serve.

Practical ways to support local schools

Many schools today operate with limited resources and stretched personnel. Teachers and administrators often welcome help, especially when offered respectfully and without pressure. Here are several ways congregations and their members can make a meaningful difference:

- ▶ **VOLUNTEER at recess.** Many schools need additional adults to help supervise students during recess periods.
- ▶ **ENCOURAGE faculty and staff.** Bringing coffee, soda and other drinks and snacks for teachers and staff is a simple but powerful way to show appreciation.
- ▶ **PRAY for the school regularly.** Gather every few months to pray over the campus on a weekend.
- ▶ **ORGANIZE prayer walks.** Walking around the school grounds while praying for students, families, and staff can become a regular spiritual discipline for members.

- ▶ **SERVE in after-school reading programs.** Literacy programs often rely heavily on volunteers.
- ▶ **ASSIST with after-school care.** Churches with available facilities may be able to host programs, or members can volunteer in district-run programs.
- ▶ **PROVIDE one-on-one mentoring or tutoring.** Even one hour per week can significantly impact a child's academic success. Many schools are actively seeking tutors.
- ▶ **HELP with improvement or renovation projects.** Painting, landscaping or minor repairs can greatly bless a school community.
- ▶ **SPONSOR character education initiatives.** Encouraging virtues such as kindness, responsibility and perseverance benefits students and staff alike.
- ▶ **MEET practical facility needs.** Projects like pressure washing, cleanup days or campus beautification demonstrate tangible care.

This list is only a beginning. Every community has unique needs, and often the best ideas come simply from asking, "How can we help?"

Why this matters

I believe strongly in what is often called relational evangelism.

While public conversations sometimes imagine evangelism as large events or formal outreach programs, the reality is that most people encounter the Gospel through relationships they already trust.

When Christians serve faithfully in their communities, especially in schools, they build those relationships naturally. Service communicates care long before words are spoken.

It shows that the church is invested not only in preaching, but also in loving and supporting people where they live their daily lives.

Schools are uniquely important mission fields because they connect generations — children, parents, teachers, administrators and support staff. When a

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congregation serves a school, it blesses an entire community network.

Acts of service also help dismantle common misconceptions about the church. In a culture in which Christianity is sometimes perceived as distant or judgmental, consistent acts of kindness demonstrate something different — the compassion of Christ lived out through His people.

Showing up matters. Listening matters. Helping matters. When children see caring adults investing in their success, when teachers experience encouragement in a demanding profession, and when families recognize genuine concern for their well-being, barriers begin to fall. Trust grows. Conversations open. The Gospel finds fertile ground.

We live in a broken and sinful world where many people simply do not know that God loves them. Christians have the privilege of making that love visible through humble acts of service.

What if the school hesitates to partner with the church?

Sometimes administrators are hesitant about formal partnerships with churches. This hesitation is usually not hostility. It is often caution rooted in policy, legal concerns or past experiences.

In these situations, a different approach can be helpful. Rather than asking “Can our church come in?”, consider asking: “We understand that formal church involvement may not be possible. However, we have individuals who care deeply about helping children succeed. Are there opportunities for individual volunteers, tutors or mentors? Is there someone we could connect interested volunteers with?”

This small shift changes the conversation. Schools frequently welcome individuals who want to serve students; they simply need clear boundaries and appropriate channels. The goal is not institutional access. The goal is faithful presence.

The church’s mission in everyday places

The primary mission of the church remains the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet throughout Scripture, mercy and proclamation belong together. Jesus preached repentance and forgive-

ness, but He also healed, fed, comforted and served.

Supporting local schools is one way Christians live out that same pattern today. It is loving our neighbor in action. It is mercy work that flows from faith. It is the church present in ordinary places where people already gather.

We may never know all the ways God uses small acts of kindness — such as a conversation at recess, encouragement for a weary teacher or a weekly tutoring session — to open hearts to His Word.

But we trust that He works through faithful service.

If your congregation has been wondering how to engage its community, consider starting with the school down the street. Pray for them. Ask how you can help. Begin small. Be consistent.

Relationships grow slowly but through them, Christ’s love becomes known. And often, that is where mission begins.

Rev. Ross also serves as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Mustang

‘Engaged in Mission’

The “Engaged in Mission: Congregation and Community” conference will be held April 24–25 at Messiah Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City.

Hosted by the Oklahoma District and the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM), the conference will focus on strengthening mission engagement, community outreach and congregational vitality within the LCMS.

Pastors, church workers and leaders, and laypeople will be equipped to plant, revitalize and disciple congregations more effectively.

Presenters include Rev. Dr. Quintin Cundiff, director of LCMS Church Planting, and Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe, director of LCMS Discipleship.

Dr. Cundiff will draw on his extensive church-planting experience in the United States and internationally. As an LCMS international missionary, he helped plant the English-language seminary in Riga, Latvia, and an English-speaking congregation. He currently works with church plants all over the United States.

Dr. Trampe served as a rural and urban parish pastor before his call to the ONM. During that time, each congregation worked together to revitalize and make a greater impact on the communities around them. In his current position, he oversees outreach and evangelism, revitalization and stewardship.

Registration is \$20 (collected at the door) and includes dinner. Messiah is located at 3600 Northwest Expressway. Participants may book lodging at the nearby Home2 Suites or Tru Hotel by Hilton. Register to attend today at forms.gle/BFTBpkzRj8dGBQmDA or scan the QR code.

For more information, contact Rev. Daniel Ross at ross.c.daniel@gmail.com.



Rev. Dr. Quintin Cundiff



Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe



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National Lutheran Schools Week, scheduled for Jan. 25–31, was postponed at our district schools due to the January snowstorm. **First Lutheran School, Ponca City**, celebrated the week of Feb. 2, which coincided with a celebration of the 100th day of school. Team Switzerland placed first in the Chapel Family Olympics and fifth-grader Knox Campbell served as the principal for the day on Feb. 6! Knox led the First Friday assembly, presented campus cleanup awards, served as a guest reader in the kindergarten and first-grade classes, and visited many other classrooms throughout the day.



CONGRATULATIONS!

We rejoice with those who are celebrating anniversaries of 50 years or more.

Holy Trinity, Edmond
Gary and Eva Goeringer
60 years, April 16

Mark and Kay Schemm
66 years, April 24

Tim and Nancy West
52 years, April 6

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Cushing
Rev. Ron and Carol Rafferty
56 years, March 28

First, Ponca City
Fred and Jane Miller
61 years, April 24

Immanuel, Broken Arrow
Marty and Willie Etchison
60 years, April 30

Messiah, Oklahoma City
Harl and Mary Dubben
61 years, April 17

Rick and Sharon Olmsted
53 years, April 14

St. Paul's, Enid
Bud and Pat Durheim
62 years, April 25

Ken and Cindy Fischaber
52 years, April 20

Robert and Twana Winter
57 years, April 7

Trinity, Norman
Duane and Nancy Brosowske
64 years, April 9

Ablaze, Tulsa



Kurt and Kathie Klein
52 years, April 5

Immanuel, Broken Arrow



Ron and Valerie Eberhardt
55 years, April 17



Glen and Loretta Herzberger
58 years, April 6

Zion, Alva



Ernie and Verlinda Otte
53 years, April 25



John and Lena Rehkop
52 years, April 20

Redeemer, Enid



Eugene and Shirley Sharp
61 years, April 30

Christ the Redeemer, Tulsa



Tom and Bev Bordner
59 years, April 1



Dan and Georgette Kuehn
63 years, April 28



Don and Marie Vavra
55 years, April 24



Del and Jan Dreyer
63 years, April 20

Happy Birthday

Redeemer, Bartlesville
Alice Gilbreath
105 years, April 8

Immanuel, Broken Arrow
Earl Franklin
95 years, April 1

Redeemer, Claremore
Dorothy Debolt
90 years, April 11

St. John's, Covington
Joy Schweer
95 years, April 29

St. Paul's, Enid
Laverna Selix
93 years, April 16

Ablaze, Tulsa



Charles Nordholm
93 years, April 8

Christ, Mustang
Bill Allen
90 years, April 14

Trinity, Norman
Lois Bollinger
92 years, April 1

First, Ponca City
Gerry Correll
91 years, April 20

Ablaze, Tulsa
Melvina Schneider
97 years, April 2

Redeemer, Enid



Darlene Schulz
93 years, April 30



District has new Comms director

With the retirement of Cyndi Smith, the Oklahoma District is pleased to welcome Caitlin Minschwaner as its new communications director.

Caitlin is a strategic digital communications leader who founded a successful lifestyle media brand and social media and virtual services agency. She is a member of Christ the Redeemer, Tulsa.

You may reach Caitlin at okdistrictmedia@gmail.com.



Caitlin Minschwaner

Share your news with us!



Submit articles and photos to oklahomalutherans.org/lutheran_witness.

Articles and photos may also be emailed to okdistrictmedia@gmail.com.

LWML convention is April 17–18

The LWML Oklahoma District Convention will be held April 17–18 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Edmond. Servant activities begin at 9 a.m. on Friday, with convention convening at 1 p.m.

Women will share their talents at the Mission Marketplace by offering crafts, crochet, knitted and sewn items for sale, along with homemade treats. All proceeds will go to mites.

A variety of servant activities will be available. Cut fleece scarves for the homeless, produce Braille pages of the Bible, and color and laminate bookmarks with the Gospel message.

LWML Oklahoma District will collect Walmart gift cards for \$10, \$20 and \$50. These cards will be given to the Battered Women's Shelter in El Reno; Hope Pregnancy Center in Guymon; and No Boundaries International of Oklahoma City for the various needs of women at these agencies.

Three different interest sessions will be held on Friday afternoon:

- Deaconess Rachell Highley (First, Ponca City) will lead "Peace in Loneliness and Depression";
- Dr. Linda Burks (psychologist and author) will present "Peace in Sorrow"; and
- Rev. Clayton Dodge (Immanuel, Garber) will lead "Peace Strengthens Your Heart."

Young women will have a special session in which they will learn from our Young Woman Representatives (YWR) who attended the national LWML convention last summer. The YWRs will share ideas of how younger women can be engaged in LWML, Bible study, service and missions to make it meaningful in their life.

Saturday presentations will be given by:

- Rev. Marvin (emeritus) and Shirley Henschel on their informative "Peace in the Unknowns of Life";
- DCE Suzanne Watt (Christ the Redeemer,



Tulsa) on the timely topic of "Peace in Family with Social Media"; and

- Rev. Ryan Honeycutt (Redeemer, Claymore) on "Peace in Forgiveness."

The Opening Worship Service with Communion will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday night. Pastor Honeycutt, who also serves as LWML district junior pastoral counselor, will be the liturgist. Rev. James Bozarth, senior pastoral counselor and pastor of Trinity, Blackwell, will preach and Rev. Tim McCarty, pastor of Emmanuel, Kingfisher, will serve as the celebrant.

The convention offering will help fund the 2026–2028 Mission Goal.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR

Scholarship Opportunity

High school seniors who have a Young Investors StewardAccount® with Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) are eligible to apply for the Take Heart Scholarship. Answer this question, and you could receive up to \$3,000:

Other than Jesus, which person in the Bible would you love to talk with?



- Recipients awarded up to \$3,000
- Apply by May 1, 2026
- Visit lcef.org/scholarship



LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF Investments are not FDIC insured, are not a federally insured savings or deposit account or insured by any state or federal agency. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. StewardAccount products are not available to investors in South Carolina. StewardAccount access features are offered through UMB Bank n.a. The recipients of this scholarship award will be notified by LCEF. Funds are awarded to be used to defray expenses for tuition, books, laboratory expenses and/or related educated expenditures. The award amount will be deposited into the student's LCEF investment. Any amount awarded will be taxable as ordinary income to the recipient to the extent it is not used for "qualified tuition and related expenses" under Section 117 of the Internal Revenue Code. Some expenses, such as room and board, will not qualify. The recipient should consult with his or her tax advisor regarding what expenses are "qualified tuition and related expenses" and to determine whether any part of the award will be taxable. If the recipient misrepresents any information, LCEF reserves the right to revoke the scholarship.