

# PenPALS

NEWSLETTER

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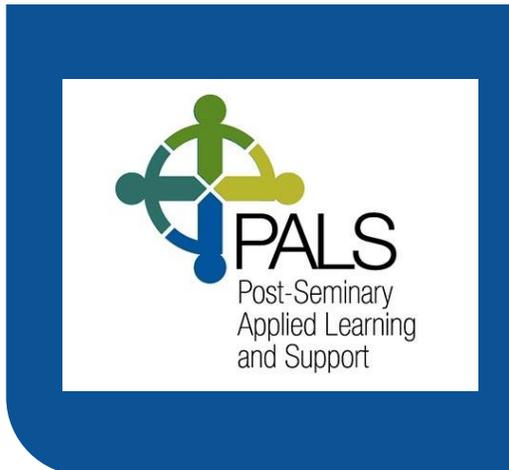
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### A WORD FROM THE PALS OFFICE

*YOU* are a primary influencer of future church workers!

Identify a young person in your congregation and ask them if they’ve considered serving the Lord in His church full time. Also, pray for this person in your daily prayers. Watch for more information and resources on the LCMS Church Worker Recruitment Initiative in the coming months. In the meantime, pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest.

Jim Baneck  
[James.baneck@lcms.org](mailto:James.baneck@lcms.org) or 314-996-1258

# The Cross



**IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. MARK 8:34**

Dear Pastor,

The cave scene in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is a great illustration of the theology of glory and the theology of the cross. The bad guy, Donovan, and Elsa enter the cave. They're searching for the Holy Grail, the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. They see many cups, but only one will give life. All others will give death. Elsa chooses one from which Donovan will drink. She chooses the most glorious, beautiful cup of all – a solid gold, emerald encrusted goblet. Donovan takes it from her and says with awe, "Oh, yes. It's more beautiful than I'd ever imagined. This certainly is the cup of the King of kings." Donovan chose poorly.

Jones must now choose. He surveys all the cups and chooses the simplest of all, a humble earthenware cup, and says, "That's the cup of a carpenter." Jones chose wisely.

In this account – the most humble was the most glorious. The most wise was the most foolish.

God is not at all who He seems to be, is He? Indeed, God is all-powerful. God is all-wise. God is life. God is holy. But God did not reveal Himself to the world in man's definition or understanding of these attributes. He displays His supreme power in the weakness of the cross. He displays His great wisdom by appearing foolish bloodied and hanging on a cross. He gives life by dying. He exchanges His holiness for the sins of us all. The glory of God is revealed in twilight darkness, blood dripping from His dead body, punctured with nails and thorns and whips, and hanging on a cross. The glory of God is the act of making sinners pure by himself becoming sin for them and making them holy and righteous in His sight. "The person who is really unrighteous, really mired in sin, is

actually declared by God to be pure and righteous! Such a truth is incomprehensible to human logic, but makes perfect sense in light of the logic of the cross.”<sup>1</sup>

It is easy for a pastor to slip into the theology of glory. In his Heidelberg Disputation, Luther writes, “He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore, he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil.” (AE 31:53). The theology of glory slithers into the pastor’s ministry when he lords it over his congregation, when he marks the success of his ministry by the power and size of his congregation and staff, when his eyes are fixed on the wisdom of pragmatism and success, and when his “good” is measured by his blogs and number of Facebook “likes.”

In this same Disputation, Luther writes, “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen *through suffering the cross*” (AE 31:52). The theology of the cross, therefore, is the life of the pastor. A pastor is one who picks up his cross and follows Jesus by preaching the foolishness of the cross, by feeding God’s people with ordinary bread and wine, by baptizing God’s people with simple water, and by giving pastoral care by pointing God’s dear children to a bloodied and crucified Savior. When you give your people Jesus, you’ve given them everything!

Foolish and ordinary and simple and bloodied to the world – indeed! And yet, all the power and glory and wisdom and might of God is in our foolish, ordinary, simple, and bloodied God. Yet, in that glorious early church hymn, “Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, be for all the noblest tree; None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thine equal be; Symbol of the world’s redemption, for the weight that hung on thee!” (LSB 454:4).

You indeed preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jew and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24)! And, dear pastor, this saving power and wisdom is yours in Christ Jesus.

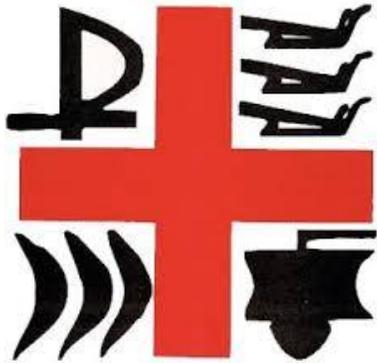
In Christ,

*Jim*

Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of Pastoral Education

<sup>1</sup> Trueman, Carl R., *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, [New Horizons](https://www.opc.org/newhorizons/NH05/10b.html), October 2005, <https://www.opc.org/newhorizons/NH05/10b.html>.





## WELCOME

New Jersey District PALS Facilitating couple, **Pastor Dan and Jerusha Fenco**.

We thank **President Anthony Steinbronn** for his work in providing this wonderful couple to serve the new pastors and their families in his district.

Pastor Fenco is currently serving a bilingual congregation, Camino de Fe Lutheran Church. Welcome Fencos!

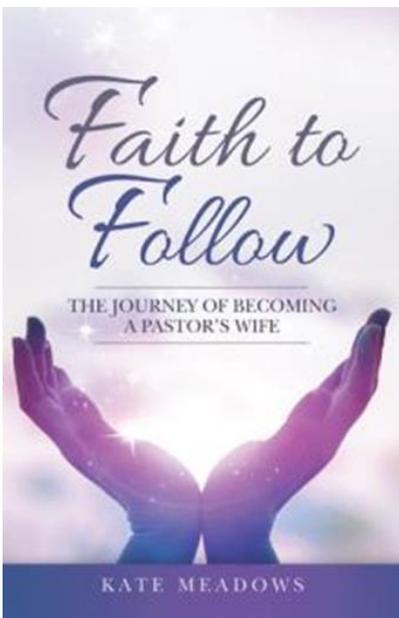
The **Iowa District East PALS** group was blessed to be able to meet virtually this past January. **Pastor Daniel Pool** gathered the group together and discussed Dr. Scaer's CTQ article "*Justification as the Starting Point for Doing Theology?*". Time for sharing the many challenges, frustrations, and JOYS during these days was greatly appreciated.

**Pastor Wayne and Crystal Huebner** led a Virtual PALS Retreat for their **Missouri District PALS** group. **Pastor Darrell Zimmerman** of *Grace Place Ministries* led the group through some of the subjects covered in his new book, *Reclaiming the Joy of Ministry*. During a women's breakout session, Crystal interviewed **Kate Meadows** about her new book, *Faith to Follow: The Journey of Becoming a Pastor Wife*. During the women's breakout session on Saturday, **Marie Wilson**, Director of Early Childhood Ministries at Salem, hosted a 30-minute kids' Zoom event.

The **Nebraska District PALS** group met over the course of 4 Virtual PALS Events this past January. **Pastor Charles and Brenda Schmidt** led discussions on PALS course *Holding Up the Prophet's Hands*. Brenda also introduced the new PALS wives' course, *Faith to Follow*. A total of 12 pastors and 5 wives enjoyed this valuable time of support, connection, and fellowship.

**Ten families** in the **North Wisconsin District PALS** group enjoyed a PALS retreat led by **Pastor Nate and Sarah Reichle** at the NLOMA camp, Camp Luther. The group worked through the PALS course, *Premarital Counseling and Cohabitation*.

"The Marris/Bergmann curriculum was terrific for spring-boarding our conversation on the topic. I am super encouraged for the churches where these pastors are serving! They have clear eyes not only about the desirability of combatting cohabitation but also about the tactic maneuvering necessary in that endeavor!" -Pastor Reichle.



The **Ohio District PALS** group was blessed to be led by **Pastor Stephen and Heidi Lutz** in their recent PALS gathering. They worked through the PALS course, *Transition from Seminary to the Parish*. They enjoyed this time for fellowship, and time in discussion regarding this huge transition they are facing.

**Minnesota South District** PALS facilitator **Rev. Stefan Wismar** led his group in a discussion of the book [Teach Like A Champion](#) as well as the PALS course *Leading Positive Change in a Congregation*. He continues to enjoy spending time in casuistry and study with these new pastors.

The **Central Illinois District** PALS group enjoyed a winter retreat led by **Pastor David and Kassie Weaver**. A PALS wife participant noted: “A wonderful meeting. Loved the relationships formed and discussions. Looking forward to the next meeting. Appreciate being able to bring our son and the flexibility involved with that.”

The **Minnesota North District** PALS group enjoy a winter retreat over the Super Bowl weekend at the Baymont Hotel. **Pastor Guy and Emily Roberts** hosted an event filled with study, fellowship, casuistry, and support. Pastors worked through PALS course *Preaching: the Heart and the Art* by Dr David Schmitt, lectionary readings, and Dr. Joel Bierman’s “Post- Pandemic Pew.”

**Pastor Kenneth and Vickie Mars**, of the **Wyoming District**, led a gathering in at **St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church in Laramie, Wyoming** this month. Couples joined together for worship, study, and fellowship. Pastors wives and children enjoyed a meal hosted at the home of **Becky Preus**. PALS pastors met with **Pastor Mark Preus** and his vicar for lunch at a local restaurant.

The **Kansas District** PALS group met for worship, Bible study, casuistry and discussed “*Visiting the Homebound*” led by **Pastor Mark Boxman**. The group enjoyed the time for fellowship, study, and lunch.

## RESOURCES

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### Pastor’s Life of Prayer



Lent is a time of pray and contemplation. Whether with your PALS group, your spouse, or on your own – check out the PALS resource, “The Pastor’s Life of Prayer” at <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral-education/pals-study-topics>.

I pray you take to heart your immersion in God’s Word. God promises that His Word is effective, sharper than a two-edged sword, that it is the power to give *you* life and salvation. It is the power to chase away the devil, the power to change your death into eternal life, and the power to fortify and sustain you in the pastoral ministry and every vocation of this life.

## SYNOD 101

*Target Date for first modules – Fall 2021*

Here's an update on the Synod 101 curriculum. Ten 3-minute video scripts with a one-page talk sheet for each module have been written and edited by subject matter experts. Because of the nature of this topic, these ten modules will now go through review by the Secretary of Synod and, as always, doctrinal review. These ten modules will be a PALS "pilot project."

To date, we have identified forty module themes. Pilot Project modules include: (1) Preface, (2) History, Confession, Purpose, (3) Confessional Position of Synod, Doctrinal Resolutions, Statements, Agreement, and Review, (4) Synod Objectives 1-5, (5) Synod Objectives 6-10, (6) Membership in the Synod, (7) Relationships in the Missouri Synod, (8) The Office of Pastoral Education focusing on the Office of the Holy Ministry, (9) Districts of the Synod, and (10) District Presidents.

After they are completed and available to PALS, we will ask the PALS groups to evaluate these modules. As we evaluate the usage and rating of these modules, we will determine if we should produce additional modules.

## PREACH THE WORD

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Preach the Word (PTW) helps pastors work together to improve their preaching through video modules with accompanying resources and by interacting with seminary professors and fellow preachers.

There are now NINE completed Preach the Word modules and more on the way!

For free access, go to

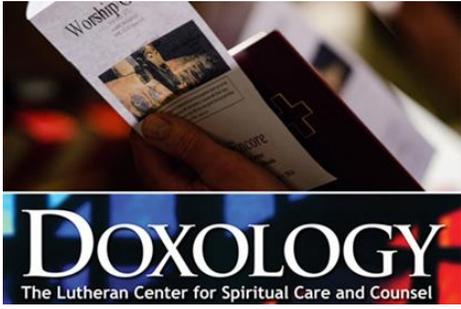
<https://www.lcms.org/about/leadership/president/preach-the-word>.

If you haven't participated yet, check out Module 5: *The use of technology in preaching* – Rev. Matt Peebles.

"The ability to spread a message worldwide is changing and growing daily. Many of these options are simple and free, thanks to new technologies and platforms. How can we leverage these new tools to enhance our task of preaching?"

## DOXOLOGY

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There are still PALS/DOXOLOGY grants available for all PALS grads. Facilitators-as you continue to stay in contact with your pastors, please remind them of this opportunity. Contact the PALS office ([Robyn.Armbrust@lcms.org](mailto:Robyn.Armbrust@lcms.org)) for a grant application.

This grant cover half of the tuition for the Classic DOXOLOGY program. (<https://www.doxology.us/>)