

Post-Seminary  
Applied Learning and Support

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# 2015–16 Annual Report



October 2016  
Pastoral Education  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122

## Introduction

In the mid-1990s, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), chiefly through its Council of Presidents (COP), sought to find ways to assist new seminary graduates and their wives in the critical transition between seminary and congregational life. This desire resulted in the creation of a cooperative initiative between the COP and the Synod's Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support (CMGS) called Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS). Since its inception in 1998, PALS has assisted hundreds of new seminary graduates and their wives during their first three years of congregational life. With the elimination of the CMGS in late 2010, the Synod's Office of Pastoral Education has been overseeing PALS since Nov. 1, 2010.

PALS utilizes geographic cohorts of new pastors and wives, usually numbering six to 12 pastors, that gather six days each year for worship, study, discussion and fellowship. While some cohorts gather on six separate days during the year, others gather for multiple days at a time. The cohorts function as supportive, collegial learning groups where members assist and encourage one another as they share many common experiences and dynamics in their lives. Participants grow in knowledge, skills and understanding as they engage study topics specifically designed to assist them, communicate openly about the joys and challenges of their vocations, and reflect upon their new experiences. While wives meet with the pastors for most portions of each gathering, they ordinarily also have separate time for study and discussion of topics more focused upon their needs and interests. Continuing education units are provided to pastors as an acknowledgement of their participation in PALS gatherings.

Each PALS cohort of pastors is led by a facilitating pastor, and ordinarily the facilitating pastor's wife leads the separate portions of each gathering for the wives. In the selection of PALS facilitators, the appropriate district president is always consulted in order to identify experienced, respected and empathetic pastors and wives. Facilitators are not expected to serve as professors who lecture or merely disseminate information. Instead, they serve to help participants learn from one another as study, discussion and reflection leads participants to fresh insights and perspectives concerning their new experiences in congregational life. Facilitators receive remuneration for their services, and all of their travel, meal and lodging expenses associated with each gathering are covered.

The partnership between individual districts and the Synod in the PALS initiative is also evident in the funding support for the initiative. Each district submits annually \$500 per participating pastor, and this amount is matched by corporate Synod. Each participating pastor pays \$25 per year.

## Summary of the 2015–16 PALS Year Participation Rates

The 2015–16 PALS year began on July 1, 2015, and ended on June 30, 2016. Reports submitted by facilitators indicate that:

Thirty-two PALS groups were formed throughout the LCMS; 31 met, and one did not. It is encouraging to note that 97 percent of the PALS groups met, for a total of 145 gatherings during the year.

It is also encouraging to note that 202 pastors and 123 wives participated in meetings during the past year. Yet, it is discouraging to note

that the total number of eligible pastors is 453. Thus, only 45 percent of those pastors eligible to participate in PALS did so last year.

In reflecting upon this data, it is evident that some PALS groups are flourishing with strong attendance numbers, while others are struggling to gather a critical mass of pastors and wives for meetings.

### District Participation

Thirty-one of the 35 LCMS districts participate in PALS. Those districts that did not have an active PALS group meeting during the 2015–16 year are listed as “N/A.” Pastors in non-geographic districts (English and SELC) may be meeting with pastors in the nearest geographic district.

District	PALS Gatherings 2011–12	PALS Gatherings 2012–13	PALS Gatherings 2013–14	PALS Gatherings 2014–15	PALS Gatherings 2015–16
Atlantic					
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois	1		5	6	6
Eastern	5	6	8	2	N/A
English	5				
Florida-Georgia	6	3	2	6	6
Indiana	12	6	6	6	6
Iowa East	3	3	3	3	4
Iowa West	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	6
Kansas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	10	6	9	14	11
Mid-South	5	4	6	2	6
Minnesota North		4	6	6	6
Minnesota South	3	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Missouri	13	12	12	12	12
Montana					N/A
Nebraska	9	3	16	16	14

New England					6
New Jersey			3	5	6
North Dakota	6	6	6	4	6
North Wisconsin	6	6	6	6	4
Northern Illinois	5	5	1		2
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	4		2	4	6
Oklahoma	4	5	3	6	N/A
Pacific Southwest			2	1	1
Rocky Mountain	5	5	6	6	6
SELC					
South Dakota	5	4	3	6	6
South Wisconsin	6	6	6	5	5
Southeastern	6	12	12	12	6
Southern		2		1	3
Southern Illinois	4	4	1		1
Texas	13	14	15	16	10
Wyoming	6	6	6	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>145</b>

The table below lists the number of pastors who participated in PALS during the 2015–16 year by district.

<b>District</b>	<b>Participating Pastors 2011–12</b>	<b>Participating Pastors 2012–13</b>	<b>Participating Pastors 2013–14</b>	<b>Participating Pastors 2014–15</b>	<b>Participating Pastors 2015–16</b>
Atlantic			1		4
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois	2		9	7	8
Eastern	6	10	5	1	
English	3	1	5	6	5
Florida-Georgia	5	1	2	5	6
Indiana	15	7	5	8	10
Iowa East	14	17	15	13	9
Iowa West			N/A	6	8
Kansas	3	3	3	2	1
Michigan	14	14	12	18	18

Mid-South	6	6	5	4	4
Minnesota North		6	6	12	10
Minnesota South	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Missouri	18	14	16	19	16
Montana					
Nebraska	10	6	13	16	17
New England				1	5
New Jersey			2	4	3
North Dakota	5	5	3	6	3
North Wisconsin	11	15	12	10	9
Northern Illinois	9	10	4		1
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	6	2	5	4	4
Oklahoma	10	10	7	5	
Pacific Southwest	2		3	1	2
Rocky Mountain	8	5	9	8	7
SELC			1	1	1
South Dakota	9	12	9	11	9
South Wisconsin	10	11	10	7	8
Southeastern	6	13	13	12	7
Southern	2	7	7	8	11
Southern Illinois	5	7	2		2
Texas	18	20	19	18	14
Wyoming	4	5	5	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>202</b>

## Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Since participation in PALS gatherings provides continuing education for pastors, CEUs are granted, one for every 10 contact hours. During the 2015-16 PALS year, a total of 722 CEUs were awarded to participating pastors. This number provides yet another indicator of overall PALS

activity and is being tracked so that trends may be observed.

The table below lists the number of CEUs that were granted in each participating district. Again, these numbers are being tracked to provide indicators of increased or decreased activity, both overall and in specific districts.

District	CEUs 2011–12	CEUs 2012–13	CEUs 2013–14	CEUs 2014–15	CEUs 2015–16
Atlantic			1		17
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois	2		27.5	29	32
Eastern	10	22	11	1	N/A
English	6	2	16	12	17
Florida-Georgia	18	3	4	21	25
Indiana	48	32	24	38	44
Iowa East	34	44	36	34	32
Iowa West				17	36
Kansas	17	16	16	6	4
Michigan	36	22	35	62	40
Mid-South	13	15	12	6	17
Minnesota North		12	21	35	29
Minnesota South	8	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Missouri	62	61	56	78	64
Montana					N/A
Nebraska	34	10	63	64	54
New England				1	24
New Jersey			6	18	17
North Dakota	30	28	17	22	18
North Wisconsin	50	56	46	52	28
Northern Illinois	22	21	4		2
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	21	7	9	9	12
Oklahoma	25	26	16	22	N/A
Pacific Southwest	10		6	1	2
Rocky Mountain	18	20	35	42	30

SELC			2	3	2
South Dakota	31	38	22	47	46
South Wisconsin	42	58	57	27	28
Southeastern	30	56	64	64	31
Southern	10	18	25	19	32
Southern Illinois	15	18	2		2
Texas	60	66	53	58.5	37
Wyoming	24	28	28	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>714.5</b>	<b>798.5</b>	<b>722</b>

## PALS Groups by District

The table below identifies the number of PALS groups operating in each participating LCMS district. It should be noted that there is some crossover of participants into neighboring districts when a PALS group in another district is actually closer than the closest PALS group in

their own district. Furthermore, pastors in non-geographic districts (English and SELC) may be meeting with pastors in the nearest geographic district. Participating districts with a blank field are those without a facilitator (vacant). Groups that did not meet are listed as inactive.

District	PALS Groups 2011–12	PALS Groups 2012–13	PALS Groups 2013–14	PALS Groups 2014–15	PALS Groups 2015–16
Atlantic					
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois	1	1	1	1	1
Eastern	2	2	2	2	
English	1	(1 inactive)			
Florida-Georgia	1	1	1	1	1
Indiana	2	1	1	1	1
Iowa East	1	1	1	1	1
Iowa West				1	1
Kansas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	3	2 (and 1 inactive)	2 (and 1 inactive)	3	3
Mid-South	2	1 (and 1 inactive)	1	1	1
Minnesota North	(1 inactive)	1 (and 1 inactive)	1 (and 1 inactive)	1	1
Minnesota South		1 (and 1 inactive)			N/A



Missouri	3	2 (and 1 inactive)	2 (and 1 inactive)	2	2
Montana	(1 inactive)		(1 inactive)	(1 inactive)	
Nebraska	2 (and 1 inactive)	1 (and 2 inactive)	3	3	3
New England					1
New Jersey	(1 inactive)	(1 inactive)	1	1	1
North Dakota	1	1	1	1	1
North Wisconsin	1	1	1	1	1
Northern Illinois	1	1	1	(1 inactive)	1
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	1	(1 inactive)	1	1	1
Oklahoma	1	1	1	1	N/A
Pacific Southwest	(1 inactive)	(1 inactive)	1 (and 1 inactive)	1	1
Rocky Mountain	1	1	1	1	1
SELC					
South Dakota	1	1	1	1	1
South Wisconsin	1	1	1	1	1
Southeastern	1	2	2	2	1
Southern	(1 inactive)	1	(1 inactive)	1	1
Southern Illinois	1	1	1	(1 inactive)	1
Texas	3	3	3	3	3
Wyoming	1	1	1	1	(1 inactive)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>

## Non-Participating LCMS Districts

The following four districts did not participate in PALS during the 2015–16 PALS year.

District	Eligible Pastors
California/Nevada/Hawaii	12
Kansas	13
Minnesota South	24
Northwest	21

## Facilitating Pastors

The following LCMS pastors served as PALS facilitating pastors during the 2015–16 PALS year:

LCMS District	Facilitating Pastor
Michigan	Rev. Douglas Adams Trinity Lutheran Church Berrien Springs, Mich.
Texas	Rev. Danny Anderson Christ Memorial Lutheran Church Houston, Texas
Iowa West	Rev. Phill Andreasen Sioux Falls, S.D.
Texas	Rev. Randy Bard Bethel Lutheran Church Bryan, Texas
South Dakota	Rev. Gene Bauman St. Paul Lutheran Church Spearfish, S.D.
Missouri	Rev. Andrew Becker St. John's Lutheran Church Arnold, Mo.
Rocky Mountain	Rev. Terry Beltz Castle Rock, Colo.
Southeastern	Rev. Gordon Bohlmann Fishersville, Va.
Nebraska	Rev. Richard Bringewatt St. Paul Lutheran Church West Point, Neb.
Minnesota North	Rev. Anthony Cloose St. Paul Lutheran Church Frazee, Minn.
New Jersey	Rev. Andrew Dinger Somerset, N.J.
Nebraska	Rev. Duane Duley Holy Cross Lutheran Church Kearney, Neb.
Indiana	Rev. Kurt Gremel Tipton, Ind.
Wyoming	Rev. Bradley Heinecke St. Paul Lutheran Church Sidney, Neb.
Oklahoma	Rev. Marvin Henschel Oklahoma City, Okla.
Michigan	Rev. William Hessler Saginaw, Mich.

Mid-South	Rev. Barry Hildebrandt Cross of Christ Lutheran Church Chattanooga, Tenn.
Texas	Rev. Eric Hiner Hope Lutheran Church Lubbock, Texas
Southern	Rev. Stephen Koenig Clinton, Miss.
Iowa East	Rev. Mark Leckband St. Mark & Zion Lutheran Churches Garrison, Iowa
Missouri	Rev. Francis Lieb Blue Springs, Mo.
Michigan	Rev. Michael Lutz Shelby Township, Mich.
Ohio	Rev. Stephen Lutz Trinity Lutheran Church Elmore, Ohio
New England	Rev. Jonathan Manor St. Paul's Lutheran Church New Hartford, Conn.
Central Illinois	Rev. Gregory Michel St. Matthew Lutheran Church Milan, Ill.
Southeastern	Rev. Mark Nieting Chesapeake, Va.
Northern Illinois	Rev. Leonard Payton St. John Lutheran Church Forest Park, Ill.
Texas	Rev. Richard Pfaff Messiah Lutheran Church Boerne, Texas
North Wisconsin	Rev. Nathan Reichle Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church Greenville, Wis.
Nebraska	Rev. Charles Schmidt Grace Lutheran Church Fairbury, Neb.
Pacific Southwest	Rev. George Spicer Life in Christ Lutheran Church Peoria, Ariz.

Florida-Georgia	Rev. Alan Struckmeyer Abiding Savior Lutheran Church Gainesville, Fla.
Southern Illinois	Rev. Steven Theiss St. Paul Lutheran Church Columbia, Ill.

South Wisconsin	Rev. Kenneth Wieting Luther Memorial Chapel Shorewood, Wis.
North Dakota	Rev. Bernard Worral Immanuel Lutheran Church Fargo, N.D.

## Number of Wives' Gatherings

A strength of PALS is the inclusion of wives in gatherings. It has often been observed that the transition from seminary to congregation may prove more challenging for the pastor's wife than for the pastor. The following list shows the participating LCMS districts according to

the number of wives' gatherings that were held during the 2015–16 PALS year. Unfortunately, not all PALS groups have wives participating, and in some cases it is a challenge to have them included. Wives' groups that met informally are marked with an asterisk.

District	Wives' Gatherings 2011–12	Wives' Gatherings 2012–13	Wives' Gatherings 2013–14	Wives' Gatherings 2014–15	Wives' Gatherings 2015–16
Atlantic					
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois			1		N/A
Eastern		2	1	1	N/A
English					
Florida-Georgia	5	1	2	6	6
Indiana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iowa East					*
Iowa West				2	4
Kansas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	9	4	8	15	10
Mid-South	8	2	2		5
Minnesota North		2	6	6	6
Minnesota South	3	2			N/A
Missouri	11	11	10	12	12
Montana					N/A
Nebraska	11	1	15	16	14
New England					6
New Jersey			2	4	4
North Dakota		3		4	6

North Wisconsin	6	6	6	6	4
Northern Illinois	5	4			2
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	4		1	4	5
Oklahoma	4	2		6	N/A
Pacific Southwest			2	1	1
Rocky Mountain		2	6	2	6
SELC					
South Dakota	4	4	3	6	6
South Wisconsin	4	6	6	5	5
Southeastern	3	12	8	12	6
Southern					
Southern Illinois			1		
Texas	7	12	14	15	10
Wyoming	4	4	6	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>118</b>

The following table lists the number of participating wives in each participating LCMS district.

<b>District</b>	<b>Participating Wives 2011–12</b>	<b>Participating Wives 2012–13</b>	<b>Participating Wives 2013–14</b>	<b>Participating Wives 2014–15</b>	<b>Participating Wives 2015–16</b>
Atlantic					
California-Nevada-Hawaii	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Illinois			1		
Eastern		2	2	1	
English		1	2	3	
Florida-Georgia	5	1	1	4	4
Indiana					
Iowa East					
Iowa West				4	5
Kansas				1	N/A
Michigan	14	10	10	16	15
Mid-South	10	5	2		5
Minnesota North		3	4	9	7
Minnesota South	4	2			N/A
Missouri	15	11	13	14	12

Montana					
Nebraska	8	1	9	13	11
New England				1	6
New Jersey			1	2	4
North Dakota		3		6	4
North Wisconsin	10	14	10	9	7
Northern Illinois	7	4			3
Northwest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	2		4	4	3
Oklahoma	6	5		4	
Pacific Southwest			1	1	1
Rocky Mountain		4	8	6	6
SELC					
South Dakota	7	8	5	10	7
South Wisconsin	5	10	10	7	6
Southeastern	5	8	10	10	7
Southern			3	2	
Southern Illinois			1		
Texas	18	13	15	15	10
Wyoming	2	4	3	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>123</b>

## Curriculum

The table below lists the curricular material as well as the number of DVDs and study guides that were requested for each topic. Material is

requested by PALS facilitating pastors for use in meetings. The tracking of these data points provides an indication of which topics are most popular with PALS groups.

Title	DVD Requested	Booklets Requested
Bible Studies for New Pastors' Wives		66
Biblical Foundations for Lutheran Catechesis	1	6
Building a Long-Term Ministry	3	30
Come to the Waters: Adult Catechesis	4	37
Communication and Conflict: Connections in Grace	4	279
Doing Law and Gospel Preaching	2	13
Evangelistic Outreach: Connecting with Your Community to Make Disciples	1	13
Facing the Forces of Trouble and Conflict in Parish Ministry	10	102
Finding the Balance and Setting Boundaries between Work and Home	14	157
Getting to Know Your Congregation		35
I'm More Than the Pastor's Wife		45
Introduction to Pastoral Leadership and Parish Admin	4	35
Law and the Gospel in the Pastoral Office		
Leading Positive Change in Congregations	8	72
Making Pastoral Referrals with Confidence, Part 1		41
Making Pastoral Referrals with Confidence, Part 2	5	41
Marriage by God's Design	2	17
Pastor as Shepherd (Hartwig)		
Pastor as Shepherd (Holm)	1	4
Pastor as Chief Steward	2	35
Pastoral Care and Ethics at Life's End	2	68
Pastoring the Dying and Funeral Preparation	7	70
Pastors and Elders	5	5
Preaching as Pilgrimage	1	6
Preaching: The Heart and the Art	2	18
Premarital Counseling and Cohabitation	4	33
Stewardship of Time for Pastors	2	14
Thinking About Stewardship	2	19
Transition from Seminary to Parish	4	34
Visitation: Calling on Inactive Members	9	82

PALS groups have the freedom to select other topics and resources for utilization in the study portions of PALS gatherings. The table below provides a listing of non-PALS courses used.

### Non-PALS Courses/Topics

A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord (Articles V, VI, VIII, Lord's Supper)

Antagonist/Conflict Resolution

Call Process and Discernment

Care Ministry

*Certainty of Salvation* (C.F.W. Walther)

*Christian Care at Life's End* (CTCR, 1993)

Christian Ethics

Communication and Blended Family Dynamics

Communion Practice and Approach

Devotional Life/Prayer of the Pastor and His Family

Funerals and End of Life Issues

Generosity: Giving Trends in the US

Heaven on Earth (Art Just)

*How to Respond to ... Islam* (Philip H. Lochhaas, CPH)

Internet/Tech Devices Accountability

Introvert vs. Extrovert Personality Discussion

Leadership/Parish Administration/Strategic Planning

Legal Issues: How to Handle within a Congregation

Managing Meetings

*Office of the Ministry* (essay by Matt Borrasso)

Parenting

Pastoral Care of People with Addictions

Personality Inventory and Spiritual Gifts Analysis

Preaching (including Dialogical Preaching)

Premarital/Marriage Counseling

Resiliency in the Pastoral Office — Counseling

*Sermon on the Office of the Ministry 1862* (C.F.W. Walther)

Small-Group Bible Study Dynamics

Synod Structure and Church Fellowship Issues

Teaching

## **The PALS Steering Committee**

Initially formed in March 2011, the Steering Committee holds teleconferences three times each year and conducts the remainder of its business via email. The main functions of the committee are to:

1. Monitor the overall status and well-being of the program;
2. Suggest and provide reactions to possible changes to the program;
3. Suggest and provide reactions to possible changes to the PALS Policy Manual; and
4. Provide advocacy for the program to various publics.

The following individuals served on the PALS Steering Committee in 2015-16:

### **PALS Facilitating Pastors (2)**

- Pastor William Hessler, Faith, Bridgeport, Mich.
- Pastor Terry Beltz, Trinity, Franktown, Colo.

### **PALS Participating Pastors (2)**

- Pastor Tristan Engle, Trinity, Park Hills, Mo. (St. Louis, 2013)
- Pastor Sean Willman, St. John's, Mayville, Wis. (Fort Wayne, 2013)

### **PALS Facilitating Spouse (1)**

- Connie Bard, Fort Worth, Texas

### **PALS Participating Spouse (1)**

- Currently Vacant

### **District President with PALS Groups in District (2)**

- President Terry Cripe, Ohio District
- President Terry Forke, Montana District

### **Seminary Representatives (2)**

- Rev. Michael Redeker (SL)
- Prof. Jeff Pulse (FW)

### **Staff (4)**

- Rev. Bart Day, executive director, Office of National Mission, and interim Pastoral Education director
- Rev. Herbert Mueller Jr., first LCMS vice-president
- Rev. Dr. Gary Zieroth, St. John's, Chaska, Minn., and interim director of PALS
- Carrie O'Donnell, PALS coordinator



## Increasing the PALS Public Profile

The Rev. Dr. Gary Zieroth has brought new life to the PALS Facebook page. In the past year, the number of people following the PALS page has more than doubled. Facilitators have also found it a convenient and effective way to communicate with their participants between meetings and to build community. The PALS office plans to work on a significant overhaul of their website, including the addition of a “leaders’ blog” to help generate traffic and interest. An integrated plan for regular Reporter ads, interviews on KFUE and other advertisement for the program is also being developed as opportunities arise.

## Presentations at the Synod’s Seminaries

The practice of making a presentation to the concluding ordination-track students and their wives at both seminaries was continued in the 2015–16 PALS year. On April 21, Zieroth provided a presentation at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This presentation occupied a 20-minute time segment during a mandatory evening meeting for all concluding ordination-track students and their wives. The presentation included a PowerPoint component, the distribution of a PALS brochure and an introduction and endorsement by a current PALS participant and his wife.

A similar presentation was offered to concluding ordination-track students and their wives at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, though in a different format. On the evening of April 19, Carrie O’Donnell provided a presentation on PALS as the entire content of the Seminary Women’s Association meeting. On the following day, Zieroth and O’Donnell offered a presentation during a luncheon that was provided for the concluding ordination-

track students and faculty. This presentation also included recent seminary alumni and wives who are participating in PALS, and they provided their perspectives on the challenges faced in the transition and the benefits of PALS participation.

## Development of New Courses

The PALS office was able to continue making good use of grant money previously received from Thrivent Financial. Five new courses were created during the 2015–16 year. The new courses are:

- Building a Long-Term Ministry by Rev. Dr. Gary Zieroth
- Facing the Forces of Trouble and Conflict in the Pastoral Ministry by Rev. Dr. Timothy J. Rehwaldt.
- Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries between Work and Home by Rev. David C. Fleming and Jo Marie Fleming
- Holding Up the Prophet’s Hand (Discussion Guide) by Rev. Rob Foote
- Visitation: Calling on Inactive Members by Rev. Michael Walther
- Parenting in the Pew (Discussion Guide) by Carrie O’Donnell

Two-minute video introductions to these new courses are available on the PALS Web page, [lcms.org/pals](http://lcms.org/pals), under the “Study Topics” tab. A new course, “How to Receive and Work with Your New Pastor and Family,” was approved for future use and will include a DVD and materials to be produced for congregational leaders. This new program is in the seminal stage but has received much support throughout the districts.

## Concluding Commentary

We give thanks to the Lord of the Church, as He continues to guide and direct the PALS program now and into the future. We have much to be thankful for during the 2015–16 year. A total of 325 pastors and wives participated in the PALS gatherings this past year, with a total of 145 meetings. They were led by a very dedicated group of facilitating pastors and wives. A total of 31 PALS groups were active in the 31 districts that participated. For this, we give thanks to our Lord, who continues to bless those who are starting out in their ministries.

Our desire to continue to improve the PALS experience is first and foremost in the planning process. We receive a multitude of evaluations from the pastors and their wives, as well as the facilitators, over the course of the year. We read and listen carefully to what seems to be working and what areas need improvement. Curriculum enhancement continues to be a main priority. These new curricula come from the needs out in the field. Outdated courses are continually reviewed and either archived or updated.

At our regular facilitators' training meeting this past August in St. Louis, we had 35 pastors and wives participate and were able to have a good mixture of new and experienced facilitators. Dr. Thad Warren from Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb., was warmly received as he provided a seminar on group dynamics, especially as it applies to the role of a facilitator. President Jim Baneck of the North Dakota District provided the participants with an update on the work of the Synod's Continuing Education Task Force. More and more, the PALS program will be looked upon as the seminal entry point for a future habit and

participation among our pastors for continuing education and lifelong learning.

At the end of year, we were happy to know that two other districts, Kansas (for the first time) and Minnesota South (returning), will be participating in the PALS program. That makes 33 out of our 35 districts participating.

Some of our groups find challenges in meeting together. Geography and scheduling are at the top of the list, as well as finding proper child care. Since fewer men are graduating from our seminaries than in the past, the smaller numbers can make these and other challenges more difficult. The challenge for the PALS program in the near future is to continue to provide quality, Christ-centered materials and leadership to a shrinking clergy base. In a few districts, the PALS office works closely with the district presidents and facilitators to adjust to the changing needs, due to lower numbers. The possibility of extending the program to five years instead of three to help enhance the number of participants and to further build upon the educational and fellowship experiences is being explored.

We are thankful for our staff, who work together for the betterment of the PALS program. We give thanks for the gals in the St. Louis office — Barbara Clark, Robyn Armbrust and Judi Winker — for their excellent work. Armbrust joined our office when Clark retired this past spring. We give thanks for Clark's many years of faithful service with PALS and Pastoral Education. We also thank O'Donnell for her coordinating and organizational efforts, and we give thanks for Zieroth as he concludes his service as the interim director.

PALS continued to help many new pastors and their wives during their first three years

of ministry. We give thanks to God for these opportunities to help strengthen these men, their wives and families, and the congregations they serve, as they regularly come together for worship, study and mutual conversation and consolation. We are thankful for the encouragement and support from around our Synod, our Steering Committee members, our Council of Presidents and our seminaries, all working together for the well-being of all our members.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*



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