August 2020

“Dear Pastor”

“...what in the world am I doing here?”
- Dr. Jim Baneck

PALS Welcome

Ordination Photo Gallery

Get to Know Your LCMS Office of International Mission

News from the PALS Field

PALS Meeting Activity

PALS Thanksgiving for Service

Resources

Grants Still Available

COVID Bible Study Series

A WORD FROM THE PALS OFFICE

Greetings from the PALS Office. I serve the Synod as the Executive Director of Pastoral Education. Among all-things pastoral education in the Synod, I oversee the PALS program.

I served as a parish pastor for 5 years in MN, and 16 years in ND. I was ND District President for 8 years until I was called to this position. We, at PALS, are here to serve pastors and their family’s transition from seminary to his first call.

Jim Baneck
James.baneck@lcms.org or 314-996-1258
Dear Pastor,

My first call was to a rural church in Minnesota North. I was so excited to finally be a pastor after eight years of college and seminary. My wife and I moved with our 1-month old first child, moved our belongings into a very old parsonage, and I arranged all my books in my first pastor study. My desk was all clean with my new pencils and notepads. And after I was all settled in, I remember looking out over the gravel parking lot one day and thinking, “...what in the world am I doing here?” The reality that “I’m a pastor now” hit me.

I’ve asked that question more than once throughout my ministry – right down to the present. A difficult meeting, giving pastoral care to a broken marriage, receiving a harsh word of criticism, dealing with budget issues, balancing family and church – the list goes on. How about you – just getting into your first call, or in the pastoral ministry for a couple years now, or a veteran in the office – have you ever had one of those “What in the world am I doing here” moments?

Satan loves these moments! He prowls around you like a roaring lion seeking to devour you with despair and hopelessness, self-doubt and fear, anxiety and depression. Satan wants to leave you paralyzed that keeps you from proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and resurrection, and the crushing of Satan through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT FEAR OR BE IN DREAD OF THEM, FOR IT IS THE LORD YOUR GOD WHO GOES WITH YOU. HE WILL NOT LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU” DEUTERONOMY 31:6
Moses brought God’s people to the shores of the Jordan River as they were about to enter the Promised Land. He turned the reins over to Joshua. Joshua’s ready to move in – clean desk, pencils sharpened, notepads ready – ready to lead God’s people into a land flowing with milk and honey. But there are enemies on the other side. There are Baals that seem to make the Canaanite crops grow. Joshua and the Israelites wonder who gets the best land and where do we settle the clan? Joshua is faced with leading all these people!

Joshua may very well be looking out the window over the gravel parking lot thinking, “What in the world am I doing here?” When you have these moments, Moses’ words to Joshua are for you too,

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you”
Deuteronomy 31:6

How do you know the Lord who called you into the holy ministry will not forsake you? How do you know He will not leave you? Isaiah, for one, makes a pretty amazing case! God says, “Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” The crucified hands of Christ, the marks of your forgiveness and the salvation of all the world, is God’s promise that He will be with you always. His crucified hands are His promise to you that your ministry is not in vain and you are called by God to preach Christ, administer the presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament, and give pastoral care to God’s dear people. That’s what in the world you are doing there!

In the event you are in one of those slumps when you’re wrestling with “What in the world am I doing here,” call your PALS facilitator, your father-confessor, your circuit visitor, or your district president. And always – you can call me at 701-226-9136 or 314-996-1258.

In the name of Jesus,

Jim

Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of Pastoral Education
CONGRATULATIONS on your Ordination and Installation!

We continue to celebrate with our new pastors and their families! Thank you for sending in your photos. Please continue to send your photos to: robyn.armbrust@lcms.org

Left to right: Rev. Jared Cooksey (St. John’s Lutheran Church, Bridgeton, NJ); Rev. Kevin Bender (Saints Peter and Paul Lutheran Church, Houghton, MI); Rev. Albert Bader (St. John’s Lutheran Church, Ogallala, NE)

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL MISSION

Recently, I was able to sit down with our LCMS Executive Director of the Office of International Mission. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with Rev. Dan McMiller.

What is the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM)?

“OIM aims to spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy to the ends of the earth as directed by our Synod bylaw’s and Convention action. OIM exists to recruit, support and care for LCMS missionaries for long-term sustainable work that will endure until Christ returns. It therefore serves as the primary collaborative working interface within the LCMS in all international mission endeavors and the primary mission interface with partner church bodies worldwide. One of our main emphasis, beyond spreading the Gospel, planting Lutheran congregations and showing mercy, is to prepare pastors and other church workers where partner church bodies do not yet exist, and to model and support faithful Lutheran theological education worldwide so that the Means of Grace and fruits of the same remain for generations to come.”

How do you feel OIM can best serve a pastor and his congregation in the first three years of his first call? What does a new pastor and his congregation need to know about OIM and supporting missionaries?

“OIM can provide rich service opportunities through short term mission trips and virtual experiences as well. The staff, leadership and missionaries of OIM will gladly engage your congregation to tell the story of the work being done at your behest, through the calls and solemn appointments that you have given us. We want to be accountable. We
can also help direct you to resources for greater opportunities to learn and connect beyond financial and prayerful support. OIM can help the pastor and congregation instill a passion for the Gospel in the local congregation while also learning about the real challenges of international mission work and specific projects that they might want to support. This knowledge can be greatly beneficial to the local parish as it considers how to reach the millions of first- and second-generation immigrants that are all around us in our local communities, and yet do not know the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ."

**You hear a lot about the Network Supported Missionary (NSM) model. Can you tell us what this is and why it's a positive model in the LCMS?**

“The Lord has richly blessed this model with support for all our missionaries. My own experience in doing NSM support raising, as a missionary, was inspiring to me. As I was given opportunity to preach and speak to congregations about my work, they, in turn, inspired me with their thanks extended and continued desire to support me though we were separated by thousands of miles. The entire missionary family is inspired by visiting supporting congregations and pastors. Additionally, the missionary is the very best person to hear from if a congregation wants to get the real picture of life and service abroad. No one can better tell the story. Both our Synod and our missionaries are blessed with these deep relationships that are developed by both congregation visits and regular newsletters received from the missionary – your missionary.”

**Can you tell us a little bit about your background, who you are, where you've served, and what you most enjoy about being Executive Director of OIM?**

“I served 10 years in South America (Peru and Chile) as a church planter with some theological education duties. I also served 4 years in Panama as a church planter, full time theological educator and mission administrator. I was also an associate pastor of a large congregation, but during that time kept engaged in Hispanic ministry through volunteer service to Hispanic pastors and congregations in South Wisconsin and serving on the Hispanic Task Force. I have prepared more than 50 groups of adults for confirmation numbering from 2 to 15 in four countries. I love home visitation and teaching the catechism. It always started with loving, friendly relationships, conversation about life and the world around us, reference to God’s Word and then, “Hey, I am a pastor, you have spiritual questions. I have a great book that can help bring us through the Scriptures. I’ll bring it next time I swing by along with some Bibles. Ok?” Never didn’t work. I also served as a home missionary in rural Minnesota and inner-city Milwaukee. Being a mission executive in the South Wisconsin District was added to my urban ministry duties in 2005. In 2014 I was called by the LCMS to work in St. Louis. I miss church planting, teaching and the wonderful experience of visitation to people who are hungry for the Gospel. My wife Lisa is a musician and teacher. She accompanied me virtually everywhere. My son Tyler followed in my footsteps. After a few years as a musician and youth worker in Latin America, where he met his bride Yanela Contreras, he is now finishing his last year in seminary. I have two single daughters. Jenna is a Spanish major with a global health minor and works in the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) as an administrative assistant. Anna is an education major with a Spanish minor, beginning her teaching career this year.”
“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you…because of your partnership in the Gospel…”

Philippians 1:3,5

NEWS FROM THE PALS FIELD

We give thanks for the many years of service our dear PALS staff member, Mrs. Judi Winker, gave to so many facilitating couples and new pastors. Judi is ending her time serving the PALS office and will continue to serve her family and congregation with her God-given gifts of kindness, love, gentleness, and joy. Judi is a pastor’s wife who has served at the Synod offices off and on since 1965!

Thank you Judi—you will be greatly missed.

The Ohio district PALS group led by Pastor Stephen and Heidi Lutz, met for a retreat at Hocking Hills August 2-4. Guest speakers, Pastor David and Miranda Mueller led a study on “Ministry to the Grieving.” District president, Rev. Dr. Kevin and Dorinda Wilson joined the group Sunday evening around the campfire for an encouraging Q&A time with discussion. Pastors and wives truly enjoyed time in casuistry, worship, study, and fellowship together.

The Nebraska district PALS group enjoyed an outdoor event led by Pastor Charles and Brenda Schmidt Friday, August 21. The 8 participating pastors and several wives enjoyed a picnic lunch, fellowship and discussion around the PALS course, Transition from Seminary to the Parish.

RESOURCES

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

As part of its Making Disciples for Life initiative, this COVID-19 Bible study series addresses the various trials in light of God’s Word and promises for us. Make use of these studies with your congregation, PALS group, or use them for individual study. https://blogs.lcms.org/2020/bible-study-series-for-covid-19/

INCENTIVE

We had a great response to last month’s incentive! So once again, to the first year new PALS pastor who notifies Robyn.armbrust@lcms.org, informing her you’ve read this entire newsletter, we will send a $25 CPH gift card.