Not in Kansas Anymore

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

There are movie quotes that just stick around for generations. Go back to 1942 and Casablanca to “Here’s looking at you, kid.” In 1980, Darth Vader says to Luke, “No, I am your father.” In 1983, Clint Eastwood said, “Go ahead, make my day.” Many of you weren’t even born when these lines were first spoken, and yet you know them, don’t you?

Well, here’s one from 1939 from The Wizard of Oz, “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” Many of us in the Church have used this line from time to time: becoming a brand-new professor at a Concordia university or one of our seminaries, becoming a brand-new district president, or becoming a brand-new international missionary.

Many of you reading this PenPALS are brand-new pastors! You’ve just moved your family away from St. Louis or Ft. Wayne and you’re in a whole new environment. You’re no longer with fellow seminarians or seminary wives. Now you’re with a bunch of people you’ve never met before. A few months ago, you were a seminarian and seminary wife. Now you’re a pastor and a pastor’s wife. These are big changes! And with all the wonder and anxiety of Dorothy, “you’re not in Kansas anymore!”

In recent comprehensive LCMS church worker wellness focus groups, nine themes emerged as the needs, desires, and wants from church workers across the Synod. The number one need was the need to be in each other’s lives…eating together…talking…listening…praying. With this need, workers expressed the desire to change the culture of the Synod to be a culture of mutual support and encouragement where workers care for each other. As you’ve come to realize that you no longer live in Kansas (i.e. St. Louis or Ft. Wayne) anymore, chances are this might be right at the top of your list of needs and desires too as an LCMS pastor and pastor’s wife.

That’s where PALS comes in! PALS is designed to address the transition issues from seminary to the first three years into the first call. Another expressed priority need of church workers was care and support through relationships. One the most highly praised programs in the LCMS that meets this need is – yes, you guessed it – PALS! Through facilitators, your district president, your congregation, and the PALS office at the International Center, PALS walks with you as you navigate your new normal, boundaries, congregational life, isolation, loneliness, peer connections, and much more!

I’ve heard from several people entering a new position in the church, including being a brand-new pastor, express in the first few months of their new position, “What in the world am I doing here?” First and foremost, God’s Word in Jeremiah applies to you – God has you where you are for a purpose… His purpose! He has plans for you to give you hope and a future as you serve God’s people where you are. So, whether brand-new at your first call, or even if you’ve been around for a while, Welcome to PALS!

In Christ,

Jim

Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of Pastoral Education
Exciting News from the PALS Field

Ohio District PALS Group

PALS Facilitators Pastor Stephen and Heidi Lutz gathered their PALS participants together for a time in fellowship, study, and much needed support.

PALS Groups Gathering This Fall

PALS groups are gathering throughout the country! Groups in the Texas, Kansas, Southern Illinois, Missouri, New England, Ohio and Nebraska districts have been sharing evaluations of PALS retreats and gatherings already held.

Facilitators in the Indiana, Montana, Northern Illinois, Rocky Mountain, South Wisconsin District, and more are currently preparing for gatherings in October. Many facilitators also share the blessings of meeting with new pastors one-on-one, oftentimes taking them out to dinner, as they get to the know the newest members of their PALS groups.

We are incredibly blessed with facilitators who not only shepherd their own congregations, but guide and mentor their PALS groups as well.

PALS Curricular Resource

Many PALS Facilitating wives are using the new CPH Bible study, **JOY: A Study of Philippians**, written by former PALS facilitating wife, Deb Burma.

What a joy it is to come together as fellow pastors’ wives to share in the gift of the Word of God! PALS wives can also take this resource home with them, as a tool for use in their own women’s Bible studies within their congregations.

Thank you LWML and Thrivent for providing PALS Wives Resource Grants!
Please Share This with Your Congregation

It’s out of the bag! As a Synod joined together, we have begun our comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative (Convention Resolution 6-01)!

We are just now beginning a full, wide-range set of focus groups throughout the Synod. Aslanian Market Research, contracted by the LCMS, is currently underway meeting with these focus groups:

- New pastors who are graduates from seminary within the last three years with equal numbers from both seminaries
- Multi-cultural pastors of any age
- Long-serving pastors with a focus on those who have succeeded in bringing congregants to Church work
- Campus pastors at secular universities
- Youth workers/DCEs
- Rostered and non-rostered Lutheran school teachers
- Lutheran High School guidance counselors with a high flow to pre-seminary church work programs
- Youth under 18
- Lay people from congregations who send many to Church work including parents of church workers
- District presidents

More about this next month…

Connections

From Rev. Mark Miller, President, Central Illinois District

“The response of our new pastors and their wives is very positive as this is something they recognize a need for and in which they eagerly participate even above and beyond their local Winkel. Common concerns unite them in relationships that are proving very beneficial. Our congregations, too, are finding value in their pastors joining in PALS continuing education and fellowship events. Another plus in the support offered in and through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”