Why?

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (II Tim. 3:14-15)

Earlier this month, I gathered some of our Synod’s most influential men in pastoral formation for a pastoral formation summit. Among these were President Harrison, President Rast (CTSFW), President Meyer (CSL), Dr. Wenthe (CUS), Dr. Ferry (CUW), Dr. Gard (CUC), Dr. Friedrich (CUNE), and Rev. Robson (CMO).

As we began, I asked these knowledgeable, respected, and influential men two questions: “Why are you so invested in pastoral formation from the perspective of your vocation in the Church” and “Why are you spending your life, energy, and gifts on pastoral formation”?

Collectively, they share the sense of “call,” shaping pastors in a world with a “collapsing Christian vision,” and raising up church leaders for our contemporary context. The bottom line, however, for these men of pedigree and experience was this: “We are invested in pastoral formation for the eternal salvation of our children and grandchildren, our family and friends, our congregations, and our neighbors.”

This summer I preached for and baptized my fourth grandchild, Elijah. I also preached for my third son’s wedding. I stared with wonderment into the face of my newborn heir and stood at the altar of my son’s commitment to the Lord and his wife. My prayer for them, and for all my family and friends, is that they have eternal life in Christ and that we live together forever in heaven.

To this end, I pray the Lord continue to raise up faithful pastors to preach, teach, and give pastoral care to my dear ones with Christ’s gifts of saving faith: Word and Sacrament. As our Heavenly Father looks into our face, His love for our soul is so great that He sent His only begotten Son to die for us and give us eternal life. This is the love of the pastor for those in his care. A man becomes a pastor to feed and nourish our sons and daughters with the blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ whereby the Holy Spirit creates and sustains saving faith.

I invite you to take some time to contemplate your divinely mandated office. Why are you a pastor? Why are you so invested in it? Why are you spending your life, energy, and gifts on being a called and ordained servant of the Word? As you meditate upon your life and vocation, thank you so much for allowing PALS to partner with you as you make your transition from seminarian to pastor. Thank you for allowing PALS to partner with you as you continue to grow in your love and skills as a pastor for the eternal salvation of our children and grandchildren.

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

South Wisconsin District Fall PALS Retreat

Pastor John and Kathleen Berg led a fall retreat for the South Wisconsin District PALS pastors, wives, and families. Truly a blessed time for fellowship, growth and encouragement.

Iowa District West PALS Gathering

The Iowa District West PALS group, was led by new facilitators, Pastor Duncan and Alissa McLellan, for the first time this month.

Pastor and Alissa led PALS families in worship, fellowship, casuistry and study.

Missouri District (East) PALS

The Missouri District (East) PALS group gathered for the first time with new facilitators, Pastor Wayne and Crystal Huebner. The group enjoyed a gathering in St. Louis around the Word, worship, study, fellowship, and presentations by the LCMS Communications Department.

PALS Course Filming: “Transition: Seminary to Urban/Rural Ministry”

On Monday, September 17 a group of servant leaders gathered to film a course that will offer advice and encouragement for new pastors entering the unique ministry contexts of the urban and the rural parish setting.
Led by Rev. Dr. Steve Schave, director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission and Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission, guests were interviewed drawing upon their experience and advice from the field. Nicole Ridley and Fred Kimbrough joined Schave to discuss the resources available from LCMS National Housing Support Corporation to urban pastors. Pastor Eric Linthicum, senior pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in urban Hyattsville, Maryland and Pastor Michael Pottschmidt, senior pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in rural Concordia, Missouri shared their insight and passion for ministry in these unique contexts. Rev. Dr. James Baneck interviewed both Schave and Kollbaum, to discuss the common challenges and blessings pastors experience in these unique settings.

**PALS Steering Committee Welcomes New Members**

We welcome the following new members to the PALS Steering Committee:

- Mrs. Veronica Demski, PALS participating pastor’s wife, SI District (CSL ’16)
- Pastor Jacob Hercamp, PALS participating pastor, MO District (CTSFW ’17)
- Pastor John Genszler, PALS participating pastor, OH District (CSL ’17)
- Pastor Nate Reichle, PALS Facilitator NW District (’10-present)
- District President Steven Turner, Iowa District West

Returning members include:

- Pastor Alan Struckmeyer, PALS Facilitator FLGA District (’08- ’18)
- Pastor Bill Hessler, PALS Facilitator MI District (’10-’18)
- Mrs. Connie Bard, PALS Facilitator TX District (’06-present)
- District President Terry Forke, MT District
- Rev. Paul Sieveking (CSL)
- Prof. Jeff Pulse (CTSFW)
- Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director, Pastoral Education
- Rev. Herbert Mueller, LCMS First Vice President
- Mrs. Robyn Armbrust, PALS Coordinator
- Mrs. Carrie O’Donnell, PALS Consultant

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

- Monitor the overall status and well-being of the program;
- Suggest and provide reactions to possible changes to the program;
- Suggest and provide reactions to possible changes to the PALS Policy Manual; and
- Provide advocacy for the program to various publics.
PALS Steering Committee members include 2 district presidents, 2 PALS facilitating pastors, 1 PALS facilitating wife, 2 PALS participating pastors, 1 PALS participating wife, 1 representative from each seminary, the first vice president of the LCMS, and the PALS Office staff: the Executive Director of the Office of Pastoral Education, and the Administrative Coordinator of Pastoral Education.

2019 PALS Facilitator Annual Training Conference

Save the date! Our next training conference for all PALS facilitators will be held once again at the International Center in St. Louis, Missouri. The conference will begin Tuesday morning, June 25 and close Wednesday afternoon, June 26.

Joined Together

The drafters of our Synod Constitution and Bylaws captured the marvelous relationship we have together as Synod in these two words: “joined together.” Bylaw 1.3.1 states, “Individual Christians are joined together in a worshiping and serving community, the congregation. Congregations, the basic units of the Synod, have joined together to form the Synod and relate to one another through it.”

For example, consider Article III Objectives in our Synod Constitution. We have joined together to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth.” PALS is one way we have joined together as an entire Synod to provide opportunity for your continuing growth.

Connections

From Rev. Donald Fondow, President, Minnesota North District

“The PALS program has consistently provided our new Pastors and their wives with opportunities for growth in theological and practical disciplines as well as offering encouragement, support and fellowship.

PALS is a tremendous blessing in helping to continue pastoral formation; offers a place to discuss and share thoughts, ideas, and concerns; as well as mutual care for one another.

I’m thankful for the PALS program, those who participate, and its facilitators.”