So Thankful!

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 118:1, 29

The author of Psalm 118 begins and ends with the same antiphon, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” This acclamation is like bookends around everything for which the psalmist is thankful.

National Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday commemorating William Bradford and the Pilgrims traveling on the Mayflower and landing at Plymouth Rock. They had their first Thanksgiving in October 1621. While George Washington declared Thanksgiving a national holiday, it was finally an act of Congress on December 26, 1941 that permanently set the date of Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November each year.

While our hearts are warmed every November with Thanksgiving, turkey, pumpkin pie, and football – Christians don’t need a day or month to wait to be thankful. We are thankful to a good and gracious God every day. However – while my heart is warmed with yet another November Thanksgiving, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone one of you for your involvement, leadership, and support of PALS!

PALS is about our Missouri Synod pastors transitioning from seminary to first call. PALS is about pastors who are encouraged, supported, and cared for so they can best proclaim the Triune God to God’s people. We support and care for our new pastors so they can proclaim Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega, like bookends of our faith and life, to God’s people in need of a Savior.

For you, for PALS, for our beloved Synod, but most of all, for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ, we say:

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

In Christ,

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

**PALS Groups Gather Across the Country**

**Pastor Stephen and Heidi Lutz** met with their **Ohio District** PALS group recently. They enjoyed discussing *Canoeing the Mountains* led by Pastor Josh Ulm. Lutz’s group rotates meetings between the homes and congregations of the pastors in their group.

**Pastor Mark and Julie Middendorf** and their **Nebraska District** PALS group met over a Friday/Saturday this month. They were able to dig deeply into *Pastoral Care of Pastors*, by John Kleinig and *The Care of Souls* by Harold Senkbeil—continuing their discussion on a topic from the recent Nebraska District Fall Pastors’ Conference.

**Pastor Fran and Kay Lieb** led their **Missouri District** PALS group through a fall retreat this month. The group enjoyed Bible studies led by PALS pastors, as well as time in the study and discussion of PALS courses, “Getting to Know Your Congregation” as well as “Transitioning from Seminary to Parish.” Funds from a Thrivent Action Team grant assisted with meal expenses in support of their time together.

Participants shared, “Exceeded expectations—helpful and looking forward to the next one.” “Didn’t know how helpful initially this would be, but thoroughly enjoyed talking to other wives and bonding over challenges…” “PALS provides pastors and their wives with a safe space to discuss issues they are facing with others in the same life phase and vocation.”

**Pastor Greg and Renee Lehr** met with their **South Dakota District** PALS group in Rapid City, South Dakota. The Lehrs were able to gather together 7 new pastors, many of whom travelled quite a distance to participate in this PALS gathering. What a wonderful opportunity for support, encouragement, fellowship, and study!

**Pastor Duncan and Alissa McLellan’s** led their **Iowa West District** PALS families through a time of worship, study and discussion. They worked through Confirmation instruction, including Adult Confirmation, the role of parents in the Confirmation process, as well as staying connected to students following Confirmation. Participants enjoyed a panel discussion of area pastors sharing their Confirmation instruction experiences.

**Pastor Wayne and Crystal Huebner’s** **Missouri District** PALS group met over a weekend this fall to study, review and discuss marriage counseling resources. The group met at the Huebner’s home Friday evening, and at Salem Lutheran Church the following day. One participant noted, “This was a helpful topic, applying both to my husband’s work as a pastor, but also to our own personal lives.”

**Pastor Daniel and Dianne Ritter** met at a Holiday Inn in Shakopee, Minnesota with their **Minnesota South District** PALS group. They worked through the PALS course, “Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries” by Rev. David and Jo Marie Fleming. They also received copies of a new resource from CPH, “In the Image of God-Gender and Sexual Identity.” The group enjoyed the discussion, time for fellowship, and appreciated the strength and encouragement received having gathered together for this retreat!
PALS Curricular Resource

The Care For Souls: Cultivating a Pastor’s Heart by Harold Senkbeil

Drawing on a lifetime of pastoral experience, The Care of Souls is a beautifully written treasury of proven wisdom which pastors will find themselves turning to again and again.

Harold Senkbeil helps remind pastors of the essential calling of the ministry: preaching and living out the Word of God while orienting others in the same direction. And he offers practical and fruitful advice born out of his five decades as a pastor that will benefit both new pastors and those with years in the pulpit.

In a time when many churches have lost sight of the real purpose of the church, The Care of Souls invites a new generation of pastors to form the godly habits and practical wisdom needed to minister to the hearts and souls of those committed to their care.

Each PALS facilitator will receive this resource, as a book study for use during a PALS meeting or retreat.

Prayers for Judi

Judi Winker, our PALS office assistant was in a serious car accident recently and is making her way through a long journey of recovery. Judi works with such care and grace, behind the scenes, serving our facilitators in support of their ministry with their PALS pastors and families. Please keep Judi in your prayers. **UPDATE: After 4 weeks in the hospital Judi is recovering at home. She was recently cleared to begin walking again with the assistance of a walker or cane. In a few more weeks she will be able to walk without assistance! Please join us in thanking God for this gift and asking for His continued healing and protection for Judi.**

Please Share This with Your Congregation

More Thanksgiving!

Our Synod gave God praise and glory for Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne at our convention this past summer for its coming 175th Anniversary!

The Fort Wayne seminary was founded to address two needs: a clear Lutheran confession coupled with a vigorous missionary effort. This Missouri Synod seminary has provided the Synod with nearly 10,000 pastors and missionaries. As your congregation thanks God for His many blessings this month, please include Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne.
While the transition from never having been a Pastor to being a Pastor takes place in the time it takes a District President to say, “I install you as Pastor of ... Lutheran Church,” the reality is daunting. More knowledge, and experience, and patience are needed to mature within the office.

Thank God the LCMS has the PALS program to support young Pastors through those difficult first years. As young Pastors meet with their experienced mentors they learn again and again they are not alone.