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

This antiphon of praise and thanksgiving is used numerous times in the Holy Scriptures. It is used to express thanksgiving to God for rescue from Egyptian slavery and all enemies, for food and provision, for answer to prayer, for salvation, and more. November is the month when we turn our hearts and prayers toward Thanksgiving. As I join the Psalmist in this great thanksgiving antiphon, allow me to express my deep and sincere thanksgiving for PALS. I am most thankful for:

❖ **Pastors** ordained into the holy ministry and receiving their first calls to preach the Word and administer the blessed Sacraments of Christ;
❖ **Moms and Dads, Congregations and Lutheran Schools** who mold, shape, and encourage their young boys to be pastors in the Lord’s Church;
❖ **Concordia Universities and Seminaries** who faithfully form pastors into theologians and shepherds to care for God’s people in the place and by the command of Christ Jesus;
❖ **District Presidents** who work with congregations in calling pastors into the Lord’s vineyard and who faithfully oversee all pastors in their care – new and tested by the cross;
❖ **Pastor’s Wives and Families** who stand by their husband and father, who endure suffering, and who love and serve Christ in the Lord’s Church;
❖ **PALS Facilitators** who care for our first-call pastors and their wives, who mentor them, invest time and effort in helping them transition, and who help them grow into their new lives in the Lord’s Church;
❖ **Congregations** who gladly hear and learn God’s Word from the mouth of their pastor, who care for him, support him in PALS and continuing education, and serve with him in the Lord’s Kingdom;
❖ **Authors and Producers** of PALS curriculum, designed specifically for the new pastor and his wife transitioning into his first call;
❖ **PALS Staff** at the International Center (Robyn Armbrust and Judi Winker) for their great work in seeing that PALS runs smoothly and everyone in PALS is served with excellence;
❖ **All Entities within the International Center** who collaborate with the pastoral education (including PALS) in serving our pastors, congregations, and districts faithfully and tirelessly (International Missions, National Missions, Mission Advancement, Communications, and Chief Mission Officer).

For all these, we at PALS say, “Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!” A most blessed Thanksgiving to all of you in everything for which you are thankful!

*Jim*

Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of Pastoral Education
PALS Applauds Facilitator Service

**Pastor Andy and Caitlin Dinger** have recently received and taken a call to the Missouri District to serve at Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis and, therefore, will no longer be able to serve as New Jersey District PALS Facilitators.

We thank Pastor and Caitlin for their service to the PALS program, pastors, and congregations in the New Jersey District. The Dingers served as PALS facilitators since 2012!

Their years of service touched many new pastors and their families with the love of Christ, and with the strength found only in Him and in His salvation for us. We are confident that God will continue His work in and through them at their new congregation in Missouri. Our prayers are with them as they now make a challenging, yet exciting transition!

Exciting News from the PALS Field

**Rocky Mountain District Gathers for a Fall Retreat in Breckenridge, Colorado**

The Rocky Mountain District PALS group led by Pastor David and Ginny Vanderhyde enjoyed an October Retreat at the Beaver Run Resort in Breckenridge, Colorado. Participants enjoyed sharing the common joys and experiences in making the initial transition from seminary to full time parish ministry. The group was able to gather just prior to the RMD Pastor’s Conference held at the same retreat center.

**NEW! PALS Course Offering Released**

We are pleased to announce the availability of the new PALS Course, **The Pastor’s Life of Prayer**.

**The Pastor’s Life of Prayer** by Rev. Dr. Jim and Myrna Baneck will address the pastor’s personal, family, and corporate life of prayer. In this course, participants will engage in four sessions of discussion: (1) The power of the Holy Spirit to create and sustain faith through the Word – even in the life of the pastor and his family, (2) *Oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* in the life of the new pastor and his family, (3) The vocation of husband and father in teaching the faith to his family, and (4) A discussion on the discipline, resources, time, and space for the ongoing life of prayer for the pastor and his family.

We are also excited to offer the course sessions electronically through Vimeo links and flash drives! Check out the PALS page ([https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral/post- seminary-applied-learning-and-support](https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral/post- seminary-applied-learning-and-support)) on lcms.org under: Study Topics_PALS Course Descriptions_Pastoral Care. Facilitators, flash drives can be ordered with the study guides, if you prefer that form to the links.

*(Photograph courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.)*
What are PALS participants saying?

Following each PALS gathering, pastors and wives are asked to fill out a meeting evaluation form. Below are comments taken from 2018-19 Fall Participant Meeting Evaluation forms.

❖ "As I continue in the transition into pastoral ministry, I find PALS extremely helpful in growing and as a source of encouragement/combating discouragement."

❖ "PALS has been an invaluable part of my pastoral formation. It provides time to gather with others who are in the same place I am in, and where we can work through issues in a safe environment."

❖ "PALS continues to be a highlight of my year. PALS has been incredibly helpful for me as I begin my ministry."

❖ "This is a great program! I wish this wasn’t our last year."

❖ "It is incredible to meet with seasoned pastor/wife to gain wisdom, guidance, and some laughs, too. Our facilitators do a wonderful job in sharing the material and making it relational."

❖ "Very beneficial to us as a family. We appreciated all the planning and topics. The children were well cared for and that was helpful for us to be able to focus."

❖ "It is wonderful to be able to talk and pray with other new pastors and wives. I also enjoy being able to learn from the topics and continue to grow in my faith."

Joined Together

DID YOU KNOW that the Synod in Convention (2013 Resolution 5-02A) supports PALS (994 votes to 49)? Resolution 5-02A recognized that “The transition from seminary to congregation for first-call pastors and their wives is a significant and critical transition for them and for the congregations involved.” And so, the convention resolved to:

1. Have PALS staff continue its efforts to enhance the PALS curriculum and facilitator training – which we’re doing!
2. Have the two seminaries continue to encourage students to participate in PALS upon their first call – which they’re doing!
3. Have district staffs continue to provide encouragement to new seminary graduates and their wives to participate in PALS – which they’re doing!
4. Have districts continue to make every effort to inform congregations of the importance of PALS participation – which they’re doing!
5. To encourage districts not participating in PALS to be encouraged in doing so – which we’re doing!
6. Have the Synod in convention express its continued support and encouragement for the PALS initiative – which they did and are continuing to do!

In a greater resolution concerning Continuing Education, 2016 Resolution 17-01 once again overwhelmingly affirmed PALS.

Fun Fact: “Districts and circuits as component parts of the Synod are obligated to carry out resolutions of the Synod and are structures for congregations to review decisions of the Synod, to motivate one another to action, and to shape and suggest new directions.” (Bylaw 1.3.6)

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**Connections**

**From Rev. Allan Buss, President, Northern Illinois District**

“When I became District President I was pleasantly surprised to hear how passionate both PALS Coordinators and participants were about the program. In a day where relationships can be superficial, even among pastors, this program invests in the new generation of Pastors and creates much needed community. I know that several men who have participated have talked about how PALS has ‘saved’ their ministry. Pastor’s wives have told me that they treasure the time and relationships. NID has been richly blessed with a great PALS coordinating couple who is ‘all in.’”