Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Dear Pastor,

My guess is that you are feeling a little tired right now, weary, and maybe even exhausted. You continue to go 100-miles an hour, you’re trying to balance church and family, and you’re either stacking completed Advent and Christmas sermons in pile ready to be preached or you’re feeling anxious because you haven’t even started them yet. Hospital calls, pastoral care, and funerals seem to increase each December. Most of all, Satan continues to torment you with doubt and frustration, leaving you to wonder if you’re making a difference in the lives of your people at all!

Now, STOP right there! Open your Lutheran Service Book to Hymn 515. Hit the pause button on your hectic life, take a deep breath, and take time to meditate on the words of this glorious 17th-Century hymn set to this beautiful Swedish tune. Think about these words as they relate to your life right now.

Your ministry is set within the context of a dark world in sin and death. That’s the reality of this fallen world. Not only you, but all the saints (including the sheep in your care) are bearing crosses and suffering with godly patience, knowing that sorrow will end because of Jesus Christ.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Pastor, your Bridegroom is arising. He comes with the brilliant light of salvation to chase away your sin, sorrow, doubt, and death. Jesus does appear! He appears for you! This is the Christmas Good News: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!” You will preach about the baby in the manger. This baby come for you. This baby is your Savior!

You, my friend, are the watcher on your pulpit mountain, proclaiming His birth and rescue. You invite your weary saints to His table to eat the meal of joy where He is present to forgive them and promise them eternal rescue. You are the herald of glad tidings — that in our hope and expectation — Jesus appears now and will appear on the Last Day. Yes, “with hearts and hands uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see the day of earth’s redemption that sets Your people free!”

Now, go back to work, go back to your family, go back to your life and REJOICE! Your God is Immanuel — God is with you! A most blessed Advent and Christmastide to you and your family!

In Christ,

Jim

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

District Conversations

“The goal of the Post Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) initiative is that newly-placed pastors faithfully, competently, and joyfully apply and further develop their knowledge, skills, and person in relation to those they serve in the specific context of their ministries, and that pastors’ wives are aided and supported as both make the transition from life in the seminary to life in the parish.”

Based on the 2019 Synod Convention theme, the 2018-19 PALS theme is Joy:FULLY PALS, especially in light of the PALS Mission Statement above. Joy:FULLY PALS will be the theme of our Seminary Presentations in March and April, our Facilitator’s Training Meeting in June, and our new District Conversations.

In the coming months, each district president and his district PALS facilitators will be contacted to schedule a ZOOM conference call meeting for a PALS District Conversation with the PALS office (Robyn Armbrust, Judi Winker, and Jim Baneck).

The purpose of these 45-minute District Conversations is to:

1. connect the District President, PALS Facilitators, and PALS Staff in a joyful face to face communication around PALS, and
2. communicate and collaborate in taking PALS to the next level – helping our pastors, their families, and congregations – move toward a joyful transition (from seminary to first call), followed by greater stability and longevity in the office of the holy ministry.

We are already experiencing great growth and blessing through these conversations. We recently enjoyed time with the New England District, President Timothy Yeadon and Facilitators, Pastor Jonathan and Deaconess Tiffany Manor.

Facilitators Stay Tuned

Based on the recommendations of several of you (thanks Manors!) we are in the process of converting our most requested PALS course DVDs to flash drives. This allows for greater flexibility in use during those times when you are without a DVD player or have no DVD drive in your laptop.
**Joined Together**

Did you know that the triennial Synod Convention is this coming summer – July 20-25, 2019 – in Tampa, Florida! The convention theme is Joy:Fully Lutheran (I Thess. 5:16-18), focusing on Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.

Did you know…

**Membership in the Synod** is held and may be acquired by:

1. Congregations
2. Ministers of Religion – ordained (that’s you, pastor!)
3. Ministers of Religion – commissioned (teachers, DCE, DCO, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants, and certified lay ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

All of whom confess and accept the confessional basis of Article II (Synod Handbook)

Then… All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold **voting membership**. So, at the meetings of the **districts in Synod** every congregation or parish has two votes, one by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. At the meetings of the **Synod** a number of congregations (in a voting circuit) shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate. (Art. V)

Interesting stuff, huh? If you have any questions on this, first contact your district president.

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**Connections**

**From Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, President, Iowa District East**

What a blessing the PALS program is to our young pastors. Being a former coordinator before becoming district president I could see the bright light in the eyes of our young pastors become dull and, in some cases, cease to shine. The ministry is always a challenge because Satan is trying to destroy it from the day a man is ordained. Many of the struggles are avoidable and that is where PALS is such a blessing.

The comradery of the brotherhood brings a sense of belonging to a common experienced vocation. The situations shared allow the men and their wives to realize they are not the only ones being attacked by the Evil One. The wise and patient counsel of the coordinator is biblical and practical at the same time. Each coordinator has been where the new pastor and his family currently is. This gives them keen insight into every facet of the ministry. The opportunity to study together, share experiences together and to learn from veteran voices is invaluable.

The pastors and congregations of Iowa District East are thankful for PALS and support it with sincere gratitude.