And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

Send me!

I’m writing this devotional thought while at the Symposium at the Ft. Wayne Seminary. I’m sitting in the library looking out over the frozen pond. Today I attended a packed chapel with thunderous singing, a magnificent choir, brass, organ, and preaching.

The experience was the same at the St. Louis Seminary at the Symposium in September. There I strolled along the walkways between magnificent architecture, listening to the carillon, great speakers, and the marvelous organ at St. Timothy and Titus Chapel.

What strikes me about both seminary experiences is observing the excitement, energy, studiousness, joy, and seriousness of the seminary students preparing for their first call, ordination, and serving as a Lutheran pastor. Many of these men are young, polite, well-groomed men with a wife and young children. They sing and listen in chapel with a sense of holy awe. They read Luther and translate their Greek and Hebrew in the library (though one student did doze off next to me – probably a well-deserved nap).

These observations made me think of Isaiah 6. There are times in my own ministry that I thought God actually tricked Isaiah (and me!). God shows Isaiah this great heavenly vision – six-winged angels, the shaking of the thresholds, holy smoke, and the speaking of the angels back and forth, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And then God says, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And Isaiah, having just experienced God and earth meet says, “Here am I! Send me.” Once Isaiah is committed, God then says, “the people will hear, but not understand; the people’s hearts will be dull; they will burn up and be laid desolate.”

By now, you realize seminary life is quite different than living within the office of the holy ministry. Make no mistake – God called you. Your calling is the highest call in the land. You are proclaiming God’s Word and administering His sacraments for the salvation of God’s people. But it can be difficult. It is difficult. It is the burden of the cross, and God has called you to it. Isaiah saw the glory of God in His temple. The disciples saw the glory of God at the mount of transfiguration. You leave your magnificent seminary chapels and classrooms to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded you.”

Here’s the key: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” What is true for all God’s people is especially true for you. In His Word, in His Body and Blood, in His waters of Holy Baptism – Christ is in you, with you, by you, for you! Never doubt it – God has called you to be His servant and He is with you always!

In Christ,

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

Central Illinois District PALS Group Enjoys Winter Retreat!

PALS pastors and their wives enjoyed a visit with Central Illinois District President Mark and Debbie Miller during their weekend retreat.

NEW PALS Course Offering

We are pleased to announce the availability of the new PALS Course, Transition: Seminary to Urban & Inner City or Rural & Small Town.

Transition: Seminary to Urban & Inner City or Rural & Small Town by Rev. Todd Kollbaum and Rev. Dr. Steve Schave is a course designed to assist pastors in the move from seminary to a unique, urban or rural setting and context. Both Kollbaum and Schave interview pastors in each of these unique areas of ministry and offer advice in making the transition. Nicole Ridley and Fred Kimbrough joined Schave to discuss the resources available from LCMS National Housing Support Corporation to urban pastors. The study guide provides discussion questions, Bible studies, and a list of resources for use by new pastors blessed to be in these communities.

We are 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) on lcms.org under: Study Topics_PALS Course Descriptions_Transition Topics. Facilitators, flash drives can be ordered with the study guides, if you prefer that format to the links. (Photographs courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.)

PALS Facilitator Training Event: June 25-26, 2019

ALL Facilitators, new and veteran, mark your calendars! This annual training event is an opportunity for us to strengthen our program by encouraging and equipping our facilitators for joyful service to our new pastors, their families, and the congregations they serve.

PALS Facilitating couples will receive registration information and conference agenda in the coming weeks. PALS funds the conference and all travel expenses.
Good News!

Each new PALS course is available on flash drive, beginning with “Pastor’s Life of Prayer.” Based on the recommendations of several of you the following PALS course DVDs have been converted to flash drives.

- Pastor: Apt of Teach
- Facing the Forces of Trouble and Conflict in Pastoral Ministry
- Pastoral Care and Ethics at Life’s End
- Visitation: Getting to Know Your Flock/Calling on Inactive Members
- Making Pastoral Referrals with Confidence
- Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries between Work and Home

As you order material online, if you prefer this format, please see the “request videos on flash drive” list provided on the JotForm, to choose courses that are available in a drive.

More Good News!

Based on the recommendations of several of our facilitators (thank you Pastor Martin Richardson) PALS course study guides can be requested in PDF format. Courses are available for download on the website, by request via the comments section on the JotForm, or simply by emailing your request to the PALS office.

Many of our PALS participants are using tablets for study and can now preview the material prior to the meeting as the facilitator sends out the PDF guide. Participants can simply use it electronically or print out a hard copy to bring with them to the PALS gathering. Wonderful options as we continue to improve the quality of our PALS program.

District Conversations

Wednesday, January 9 we enjoyed a conversation with the Texas District PALS groups. President Michael Newman joined us, as well as several of our Texas PALS facilitators. The Indiana District facilitators and President Daniel Brege joined us in conversation Wednesday, January 23.

We are continuing to work with our PALS districts to set up these meetings and look forward to continuing to receive insight, encouragement, and ideas for use within our PALS program! We look forward to upcoming meetings with the Minnesota South and Nebraska districts.
**Joined Together**

Everyone’s talking about “relationships” from the corporate world to Millennials to the Church. Some act as though “relationships” was a new concept. Did you know that “Relationships” is the very first thing mentioned in our Synod Bylaws? Relationships within and through the Synod under the “Purpose of the Synod” – I.I.I. Committed to a common *confession* and *mission*, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another *in the Synod* to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives.”

Who would have thought…

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**Connections**

*From Rev. John Wille, President, South Wisconsin District*

“PALS has been and is a wonderful blessing for our newly ordained church workers and their wives. It provides a safe place for the newly ordained to talk about the demands and tensions of being a pastor which they cannot learn in white towered academia, at the seminary. Led by a seasoned pastor the members of PALS get to learn from one with actual parish experience. The newly ordained rub shoulders with those who are also learning to apply the doctrine they learned at seminary by now applying it to the lives of God's people. PALS continues to be a great blessing for the church and her people.”