



WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER



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News and Notes from the President's Office

PARTNERS IN MISSION

Two Districts Moving 'Beyond Survival Mode'

'... we want to help move people into vision mode.'

By Kim Plummer Krull

Along with sharing a border, Minnesota North District President Rev. Donald Fondow and North Dakota President Rev. Dr. James Baneck share the conviction that God's people are called to look outward, including reaching out in international mission fields. Instead of their districts attempting to shoulder mission work solo, both men believe in the power of partnerships. "It's exciting that the Synod is looking to partner with districts in foreign missions," Baneck says. "People in our congregations are interested in and seeking ways to be a part of international projects. It's an opportunity for grassroots ownership."

In this edited interview, Baneck (JB) and Fondow (DF) discuss a growing orphan care project in Kenya started by LCMS members in North Dakota and Minnesota and partnerships that move congregations and districts beyond "survival mode" into "vision mode."

Q When you traveled to Kenya in February, you got a firsthand look at Project 24 (www.lcms.org/project24), the orphan care program started by LCMS members in the North Dakota and Minnesota North districts in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) and LCMS World Relief and Human Care. What do you

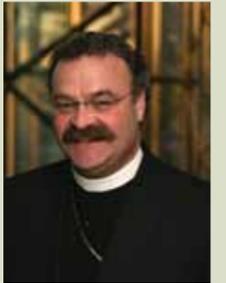
want fellow LCMS members to know about this partnership project?

JB Project 24 began with a group of men asking ELCK Bishop Walter Obare, "If we partnered with you, what would you want us to do?" The goal is to build 24 rescue [orphan care] centers to raise up a generation of Lutherans and a generation of leaders—not only for the ELCK but for the Kenyan culture as well. [Six centers are now operating, with four more under construction and plans for another 10 under way.] I'd love to see our district take on building and maintaining a Project 24 site, supporting what these men began. It's a great opportunity for our district to get involved in an international project.

Q You both mention that districts and congregations need to fight a tendency toward an "inward" focus. How can partnerships help our church reach out internationally?

JB We can do so much more together than we can do alone. In Kenya, for example, the Minnesota North and North Dakota districts have a common interest through Project 24. It's an opportunity to look beyond ourselves and serve internationally as individual members, congregations and as districts. The LWML, Orphan Grain Train and other ministries also work in Kenya. Instead of working

Partnership in the Gospel



We have a "life together" as a church. It is a life marked by bearing witness together to Christ, and having compassion upon those within and without the fellowship of this orthodox Lutheran faith (Gal. 2:9–10).

This "life together" is both gift and task. It is given with Christ's Word and Sacraments, and it must be tended both in doctrine and life (Acts 2:42). Where this life together is strained and broken, there are tears and anxiety (2 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:28). Where it endures and is restored, there is joy (2 Cor. 1:24)—joy in mission (Acts 15:3), joy in a life of faith shared (Rom. 15:32), joy in encouraging each other (2 Cor. 7:13), joy in the midst of trials (1 Thess. 1:6), and joyful compassion (Heb. 10:34).

Anything I might blather about "partnerships" would be but a weak shadow of a shadow compared to the following golden words of St. Paul.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:3–11).

■ Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

separately, we need to look for ways we can work together and get more done together.

DF After our two districts did joint theological conferences, we started looking for a project we could do together to connect our members and as an opportunity to make an international impact together. People from our districts already are involved in Project 24, so why not build on that involvement, expand it and make it a formal mission outreach of the district? We believe that if we present a strong mission opportunity before the people, the support will follow.

Q How do you see the new emphasis on WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER helping your district accomplish ministry goals?

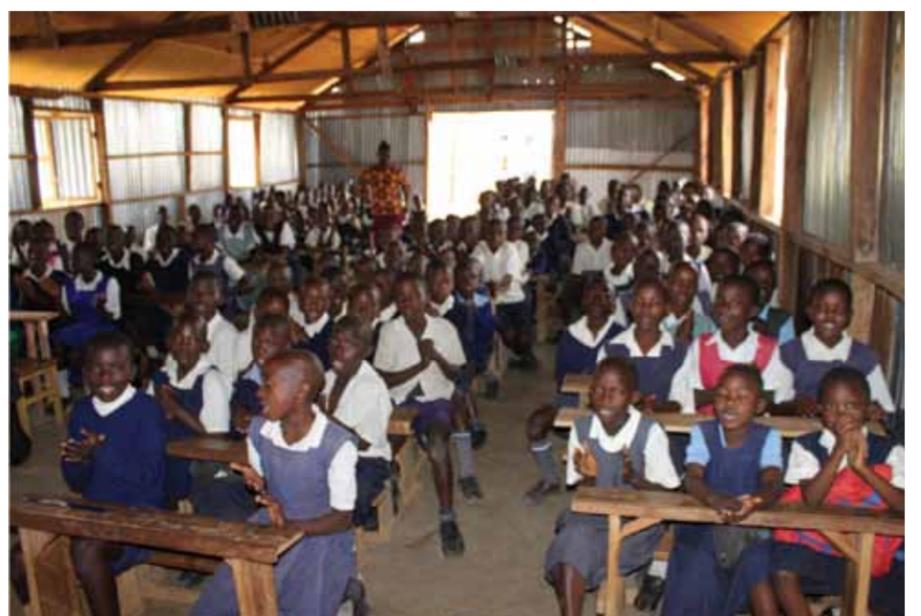
DF It's definitely a great way for looking at the overall work that the Lord has privileged us to be a part of. That threefold focus touches on who we are as the church and who the Lord would have us to be. We are to be witnesses in showing God's love and doing acts of mercy out in the world together, not in a vacuum.

JB In the past, we've done each of those emphases, yet some people may have been afraid of a "social Gospel."

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President James Baneck with two deaconesses, providing care for body and soul at Project 24 Rescue Centers in Kenya.



Some of the children helped by one of the Project 24 Rescue Centers in Kenya.



PARTNERS IN MERCY

Three RSOs Work with Synod to Do More Together

■ Bethesda Lutheran Communities ■ Mill Neck Family of Organizations ■ Concordia Lutheran Ministries

By Kim Plummer Krull

When a Lutheran medical clinic opens this summer in Kisumu, Kenya, the facility will provide a new level of care for Africans with special needs, including developmental and hearing disabilities.

Along with launching a much-needed ministry, the clinic represents a partnership that includes two LCMS Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) whose leaders firmly believe “when we work together, we can do even more than we can individually,” says Bethesda Lutheran Communities’ Dr. Jacob A.O. Preus.

“No one organization can do everything for everyone,” says Preus, Bethesda executive vice-president. “When we bring our resources, our competencies and our experience to partnerships, we can have quite an amazing capacity.”

Clinic in Kenya

Bethesda collaborated with Mill Neck Family of Organizations to develop the clinic, a vacant building at the compound operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya. Bethesda (www.bethesda.lutherancommunities.org) serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Mill Neck (www.millneck.org) provides services for people who are deaf and their families.

Mill Neck’s Rev. Steven Schumacher calls development of the clinic, which includes a pediatric surgical unit and testing for children with special needs, “one of those endeavors with multiple complexities” that works better with partners.

“This is not simply a care station but a project so large that the amount of time and funding needed would be too consuming for one entity to do alone,” says Schumacher, director of Deaf Ministry. “By working with Bethesda, we are more readily able to

do this project and can continue to do other [partnership projects.]”

While the Synod’s RSOs provide faith-based human care services throughout the United States, many also serve internationally. To have a global outreach in today’s tough economic climate, LCMS leaders say partnerships are a must, with sister RSOs, congregations, districts and the Synod.

Group Homes in the Dominican Republic

Bethesda President and CEO Dr. John Bauer points to a new group home in the Dominican Republic as another example of an RSO partnership with Synod ministries, including LCMS World Relief and Human Care and LCMS World Mission. The group home, for orphans with developmental disabilities, opened this summer in Palmar Arriba next to a young LCMS mission congregation.

Over the past five years, Bethesda has collaborated in the Caribbean nation on a project that includes planting the first Dominican Lutheran congregations and launching ministry to improve the care of Dominicans with developmental disabilities. “Here’s a project where we helped train members of this fledgling congregation to reach out to children,” Bauer says. “It has all the components of WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER, which have long been at the core of what Bethesda is as an organization.”

LCMS partnerships are essential to the Dominican mission. “It would have been unwise for [Bethesda] to go into a country and attempt to start services for people with developmental disabilities. Instead, we came alongside people who were already there and offered advice and counsel,” Preus says. (Other partners in the Dominican include the Lutheran Church of Brazil, the LCMS South



Clinic under construction in Kisumu, Kenya, for the testing and treatment of hearing and developmental disabilities.



Barbara Below shares Christ’s love with two children at the Bethesda Home in Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic.

Wisconsin District and St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Myers, Fla.)

‘1001 Orphans’

In western Pennsylvania, Concordia Lutheran Ministries (www.concordialm.org) strives to be a good corporate citizen providing health care services. But more importantly, says Keith Frndak, president and chief operating officer, the RSO wants to be “a citizen in our LCMS family, a part of the church.”

Concordia designates a percentage of its annual budget to international mission work. “Just as we may criticize some congregations for being too inward, we want to make sure we deliberately look beyond our own RSO needs,” says Frndak, who also serves on the LCMS Board of Directors.

While Concordia lacks expertise in international needs with a Gospel focus, the RSO “looks to the Synod to find that combination and the best opportunities for us,” Frndak says. “They have the necessary staff, resources and exposure.”

One example: Concordia teamed up with LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) to launch “1001 Orphans” (www.lcms.org/1001). The orphan sponsorship program connects Kenyan children with ELCK families and congregations. WR-HC donors provide financial support.

“We couldn’t have found [ELCK

Bishop Walter] Obare and started 1001 Orphans without LCMS partnerships,” Frndak says.

Working Together

While some RSOs tend to be “self focused” and want “solo project ownership,” Frndak says, “we are better together. If the church works together, we can make a powerful impact.”

Instead of dwelling on financial challenges, Bethesda looks at today’s economic situation as “less a crisis and more an opportunity to think about how we can improve ministry,” Bauer says. One result is a shift toward encouraging and enabling partners to start outreach to people with disabilities instead of Bethesda attempting to shoulder all such ministry.

In the United States, for example, Bethesda has training materials, consulting resources and religious life curricula to help congregations develop their own ministries to people in their communities who have intellectual and developmental disabilities.

At Mill Neck, Schumacher agrees that partners can lead to stronger ministry. “We welcome opportunities to explore new and broader partnerships throughout the Synod to bring the Gospel to the deaf and their families in all parts of the world,” Schumacher says. “The only negative we see is a lack of time. Unfortunately, time does not allow us to tackle everything at once.”



Kenyans who live near the clinic are some of the families who will be assisted by the clinic being built by Bethesda and Mill Neck.



CONGREGATIONS REACHING OUT

A Tale of Two Campus Ministries

Though the face of campus ministry has changed over the years, preaching Christ to students never changes.

By Gretchen Roberts

A rich history and promising future define LCMS campus ministry. Beginning in 1920 on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the LCMS planted chapels centered in Word and Sacrament while other denominations' campus ministry models were based on "clubs" or "centers." Today more than 170 campus ministries and 610 "contact ministries"—churches near colleges and universities—reach out to 160,000 LCMS students and millions of unchurched students.

Traditionally, a full-time campus pastor has served an on-campus chapel, funded by district dollars; but as budgets have dried up and the dynamics of college life have changed, many campus ministries have shifted from that model to one of local congregational support.

"The future of campus ministry is very much in congregations asking 'who is my neighbor?' and seeing that they have an opportunity for outreach to Lutheran and non-Lutheran students alike," says Pastor Marcus Zill, Christ on Campus executive for Higher Things and campus pastor at St. Andrews Lutheran Church and Campus Center in Laramie, Wyo. "Campus ministry doesn't take money, it takes initiative. It takes the church being the church for young people at a pivotal time in their lives."

Take a look at how two congregationally-based campus ministries reach out to and minister to students in the changing landscape of campus ministry.

Luther Memorial Chapel Milwaukee, Wis. (lmcusc.org)

■ **Serves:** University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee; Concordia, Mequon; Marquette University; Wisconsin Lutheran College; and others

■ **History:** UW–Milwaukee had a full-time campus pastor across the street from campus until 2001, when the district cut funding for the full-time position and asked Luther Memorial, six blocks from campus, to take over.

■ **Ministerial and financial model:** Dr. Kenneth Wieting supervises a vicar who spends about half his time on campus, a part-time student coordinator and a part-time international student coordinator. The district provides a small stipend, and the congregation of Luther Memorial Chapel funds the balance and provides volunteer support for meals and events.

■ **Reaching out:** Rachel Ploetz, student coordinator,

sends out a mailing each summer to every LCMS congregation in the five surrounding districts (about 1,000) encouraging pastors and families to contact their LCMS campus minis-



Students worshipping at a Fall Study Weekend at University Lutheran Chapel—Minneapolis, Minnesota.

try on behalf of their students, and to send names of students to Luther Memorial. Most students from other colleges find Luther Memorial by word of mouth.

■ **Activities:** "Our main focus is on worshipping together, receiving Christ's gifts on Sunday mornings," Ploetz says. Weekly on-campus Bible study, an informational table four days a week at the student union staffed by the vicar and volunteers, an on-campus speaker each semester, social events like trips to the Brewers' games and after-church meals round out the ministry. The international student ministry involves worship and Bible study, monthly potluck meals, social events and ongoing English classes.

■ **Blessings:** "The blessings go two ways: enrichment of the congregational life with these young people present and involved, and in providing them a church home away from home," Wieting says. Some college students become very involved in the life of the congregation, singing in choir and teaching Sunday school. Challenges: Finding the students: "Contact information is gold," Wieting says. Once students are found, getting them to show up to church and events in opposition to the inner pull for freedom and the pressure points they encounter on campus.

■ **Opportunities:** Ploetz sees opportunities for congregational members to get involved by volunteering for campus ministry events or even to make a concerted effort to get to know students and welcome them at church. International student ministry is a growing area with many opportunities, Wieting says, with

students coming from other countries for a year or two, often not knowing Christ but needing to learn English. Luther Memorial has baptized and confirmed several international stu-

dents who in turn have gone home and spread the Good News there.

Lutheran Campus Ministry Knoxville, Tenn. (utklutheran.org)

■ **Serves:** University of Tennessee–Knoxville (UT) and other area college campuses

■ **History:** When the full-time LCMS campus pastor retired in 2003, the district dropped campus ministry funding due to other mission activities. Students at UT began attending First Lutheran Church, three miles from campus, and area pastors began a campus Bible study. In 2006, First Lutheran called Rev. Derek Roberts as associate pastor/campus minister to serve the students at UT and the growing church and school at First Lutheran.

■ **Ministerial and financial model:** Pastors Paul Bushur and Derek Roberts provide Word and Sacrament ministry to students at First Lutheran Church, and Roberts runs the campus ministry, raising between \$15,000 and \$30,000 each fall through an appeal to local churches and individuals who have a heart for campus ministry. The remainder is funded by First Lutheran Church.

■ **Reaching out:** Each semester, Roberts receives a list of incoming students who indicated they are Lutheran on registration forms, and he contacts them and invites them to church and Bible study. In August, he has an on-campus table to hand out water and information about UTK Lutheran. Many students find the campus ministry through the website.

■ **Activities:** "Above all, Christ keeps students connected through the Divine Service, offering forgiveness of sins, life and salvation," Roberts says. Weekly on-campus "table talks"—a meal and Bible study—as well as social events and a yearly apologetics speaker round out campus activities. Blessings: "Students truly seem to benefit from a serious confession and authentic worship," Roberts says.

Want to Start a Campus Ministry in Your Area?

LCMS campus ministries cover just a quarter of colleges and universities around the United States. Clearly opportunities exist to support existing campus ministries and to begin new ones. "You always hear that youth are the future of the church. I would say they are the present," Wieting says.

Prayerfully consider beginning or supporting campus ministry for students in a critical transitional time in their lives. Here are some steps to take as a starting point.

- If you're near a campus and have even one or two students worshipping with you but no intentional student outreach, sit down and talk with those students. Ask if they know of others you can invite to church and how to reach them.
- Consider registering as a student organization on campus, which provides access to rooms on campus and, at some colleges, a list of Lutherans each semester.
- Talk with your circuit and district about possibilities for financial support.
- If you don't have the time or money to invest heavily in a campus ministry, simply invite students to church and connect them with members of your congregation for a home away from home.
- Seek counsel from other campus ministers. Lutheran Student Fellowship (lutheranstudentfellowship.org), Lutheran Campus Mission Association (lcmscampusministry.org) and Christ on Campus (higherthings.org/campus) are three LCMS campus ministry organizations.

"Seeing them come to a closer relationship with Christ, wrestle with the deepest questions in life, and analyze the world and how they're getting ready to serve and respond to it, is truly a blessing."

■ **Challenges:** Students have busy schedules, and keeping up the energy and activities that meet their needs in the right time and place can be difficult. "You have to be an initiator, even when it seems like no one else—even the students—seems to care, because ministering to them is so important," Roberts says. Balancing the needs of the congregation and day school in his role as associate pastor with the need to spend more time on campus with students is an ongoing challenge.

■ **Opportunities:** "The greatest opportunity is in getting students to church in the presence of Christ, encouraging them to be in but not of the world, and teaching them not just what they believe, but why they believe it and how to share it with others," Roberts says. "Students today are curious, and they want to be prepared to talk to others about what they believe and practice."



DISTRICT IN MISSION

Sending Two to South Africa

By Kim Plummer Krull

"Incredibly thankful." That's how Dr. Carl Rockrohr describes his reaction when he learned that the LCMS Michigan District will provide \$50,000 to help support him and his wife, Deborah, in their new calls from LCMS World Mission to serve the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA).

"What a great sense of support and partnership from the church," says Rockrohr, who will teach at the Theological Seminary in Tshwane and assist the LCSA bishop. Deborah, a deaconess, will be director of the seminary's residential deaconess training program.

The Rockrohrs are the sixth missionary family from Michigan to receive funding through the Michigan District The Future is Now campaign in partnership with the Synod's *Fan into Flame*.

"Reaching out in Michigan is our top priority, but it's also our responsibility to take the Gospel outside our borders," says Ray Zavada, the district's vice-president for development. "While we don't have the expertise or the opportunities that World Mission has to place international missionaries, we have people who want to help support those missionaries with their gifts."

Michigan District President Rev. David P.E. Maier acknowledges financial challenges in a state with 14 percent unemployment. But, he adds, "We're still the body of Christ. We have blessings and responsibilities.

Hopefully, what we do will influence others to come by God's grace to know Jesus Christ."

The Rockrohrs are former career missionaries in Ghana. Carl now serves as assistant professor of religion at Concordia University, Ann Arbor. Beginning this summer, he and Deborah will visit congregations and seek partners to help them raise the required 80 percent of their first year field budget.

The Michigan District provides some of those "vitally important" funds. "We are so thankful that during these tough economic times for our congregations and our schools, the district is saying they value the work of the Lord in South Africa," Rockrohr says.

To learn more about the Rockrohrs and their call, visit www.rockrohr.net.



Dr. Carl Rockrohr and Deborah, a deaconess, will serve the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, teaching at the Theological Seminary in Tshwane. A gift from the Michigan District helps with crucial financial support for the missionary couple, who will live in South Africa with their son, Ted.



Pastor David Jurech preaches on Jesus with the woman at the well (John 4) in Czech to the congregation at St. Michael's in Prague.



Prague Lutherans Help Japan Disaster

By Albert B. Collver

Pastor David Jurech, superintendent of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (EVAC) in Prague, recently wrote to the LCMS regarding the earthquake and subsequent disasters in Japan. He wrote, "About Japan it is very difficult to find an explanation. Only God knows why that happened, and we should not speculate about it, but rather repent . . ." (Luke 13:1-5). He went on to explain that his church is small but expressed how his church would like to provide some assistance to the Japanese. He wondered if it might be possible for his church to partner with the LCMS in some way.

Pastor Jurech's message reflects two significant biblical themes: repentance, and care for the body of Christ and for our neighbor in need. Repentance because we do not know the Lord's reason for permitting suffering in a particular place, but we do know that because of our sin we deserve judgment and punishment. So as Jesus said, we repent for our sin and pray for our neighbor in need. As the body of Christ we care for other Christians who are hurting. As Martin Luther writes, "This is obvious: if anyone's foot hurts him, yes, even the little toe, the eye at once looks at it, the fingers grasp it, the face puckers, the whole body bends over to it, and all are concerned with this small member; again, once it is cared for, all the other members are benefited" (AE 35:52).

As far removed as Prague and the Czech Republic are from Japan, the Lutheran Church there hurts like you do when you stub your toe over the suffering of others in Japan. Because the Lord has given us a LIFE TOGETHER with Him and shown us compassion, we desire to have compassion on others in need both near and far from us. As a body works together

for the well-being of the person, the church throughout the world (here in the United States, Prague, and also with gifts from our partner churches in Hong Kong and Korea) can work together to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ in Japan.

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Prague is not a partner church of the LCMS. In fact, the LCMS did not reach out to this church. Rather, this church found the LCMS as it sought out a church that believed the Holy Scriptures and confessed *The Book of Concord*. Lutheranism in the Czech Republic has a long and difficult history, beginning shortly after the Reformation. After Lutheranism was exterminated in Prague during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), it re-emerged in the 18th century as German Lutherans came to Prague. Under communism, Lutheranism all but vanished in Prague, only to emerge again in 1993. Currently, LCMS pastor Ron Stehr conducts English services in Prague.

The EVAC is not the only church the LCMS has engaged in conversations in the Czech Republic. In the fall of 2010, the LCMS signed a working agreement with the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession near the border of Poland to cooperate in externals and to work together where possible. The Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession continued to exist in hiding during the Thirty Years' War and suffered much under communism. While the LCMS does not have fellowship with either church body in the Czech Republic, we continue in conversation, praying Jesus' prayer that the church may be one, having a LIFE TOGETHER in Christ and with a common confession of faith.

PARTNERS IN MISSION

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But when we connect mercy with who we are in Christ, it's the church doing Christ's work on earth. When you look at what we're doing in Kenya with Project 24, it's mercy work, witnessing by proclaiming the Gospel and it's certainly life together. We're not just being Christians here in this country, but having life together with our partners in Kenya. At the same time, [Kenyan Lutherans] have a lot they can teach us about the Christian faith.

Q Our Synod faces challenges, economic and otherwise. Yet you sound excited about future mission and ministry opportunities. Why?

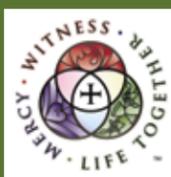
JB I am excited. When you go to Kenya and see people worshipping in corrugated metal churches and they

are so joyful and lively, how can you dwell on our own financial short-ages? We are so blessed. We have so many resources. The more we tell the story and show how we can partner together to benefit our brothers and sisters in Christ, people are going to want to be a part of that story.

DF When you make a connection with workers you help send into the field or a project you help support, it is exciting. Yes, there's been a recession. Yes, our district has more congregations in communities of 2,500 people or less than any other district. There's a tendency to focus inward and go into survival mode, but we want to help move people into vision mode. The Lord has called us to make disciples of all nations. When we're faithful to our calling, people grow in their faith and want to go with their faith.

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