



DISTRICT NEWS

OKLAHOMA

New Year's Blessings, Saints of Oklahoma!



Getty Images

God's mercies are new every morning, every year

The Alarm

In my hometown of Orlando there were two means for alerting folks of impending danger from fires or tornadoes: the telephone and the tornado siren.

Mary Shackleford was our telephone "central" operator who would put out a "general ring" when such dangers approached. This was somewhat effective if you happened to be near your telephone at the time. However, after an F-5 tornado on May 25, 1955 devastated Blackwell, the city fathers of Orlando decided to secure a tornado siren.

The white water cooler appearing siren was mounted on the Burkett Building, which was the tallest point on Main Street. The Burkett Building was a white, stucco, two-story building housing the Case tractor dealership as well as Bill Edward's mechanic shop. Bill had married Carol Burkett and had taken on the role of fire chief and civil defense coordinator. He loved sirens and flashing red lights. He not only had

the credentials to be in charge of the new tornado warning siren, he also had the key to the building.

The siren gave townsfolk a sense of security, even though Mary didn't trust it. There was one flaw with the new siren: it took a human hand to flip the switch and that hand was attached to Bill's arm, whose other hand held the key to the Burkett Building door! In a severe storm Bill was usually monitoring the southwestern sky on a ridge west of town. This meant an uncomfortable delay between any tornado sighting and switching on the siren.

Since there had not been a tornado in Orlando since 1927, the siren rarely sounded. Maybe it sounded when there was a severe storm, maybe at midnight on New Year's Eve if Bill could stay awake, and once by accident as I fumbled for a light switch in preparation for a Ground Observer Corps adventure on the roof of the Burkett Building!

Fear

By the grace of God we are starting a new year – 2022. Will this be a year dominated by God's grace directing our lives or one dominated by fear dictating our lives?

Again this year we are hearing many alarms being sounded about situations that could negatively impact our life. COVID continues to be the primary alarm as it mutates into different strains. Inflation is sounding an alarm as cost-of-living increases bring fears to those on set incomes. Church attendance has not rebounded even though

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Rev. Barrie Henke
District President



Fall retreat

The women of LWML Oklahoma District attended the 2021 Fall Retreat, held Nov. 5-6 at Canyon Camp, Hinton. The theme was “God’s Quilt of Comfort: Wrapping up in the Psalms.”

We began our retreat with a campfire roast. The first two Bible studies were led by Peggy Grunow, VP of Christian Life. The first study focused on the Psalms as layers of information that help us through our journey and point us always to Jesus our Savior. In the second Bible study, we focused on the history of God’s people’s presented in the Psalms.

Time was given for several quilting activities: journaling, drawing, quilt tying and just visiting. We ended the night with devotion and singing led by Rev. John Wackler, district pastoral

counselor and pastor of Zion, Stillwater. Saturday began with breakfast and the third Bible study, led by Kasey Meyer, VP of Communication. The study focused on the Psalms being poetically beautiful and descriptive. Between each activity on Saturday, a skit on how prayer can get us through each storm in life was presented.

The fourth Bible study, led by Beverly Bahr, VP of Gospel Outreach, focused on how the Psalms are used in our worship service. The fifth and final Bible study focused on Jesus being the thread that ties all of God’s Word together. Closing worship was led by Pastor Wackler. Each woman was filled with God’s Word, uplifted and truly blessed.

— Kasey Meyer, VP of Communication

NEW YEAR

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

pandemic fears have eased up. Financial fears have caused many congregations to cut back on mission, ministry and even staffing.

When congregations fearfully falter, our Oklahoma District work program is impacted. Since at least 60 percent of our district budget is directly designated for missions, and another 25 percent is indirectly funding mission outreach, we could have big slashes in our mission outreach. Fear also creates bad feelings. Some congregational members blame their pastor for the problems, while some pastors blame their members. All of these actions and reactions are results of fear about the present and the future. It is said that fear immobilizes, and it

does! That is why Satan loves to manipulate us sinners with fear!

Trust

But God does not want His people to enter a new year, or even a new day, filled with fear or directed by it. Instead, He desires that we enter 2022 with confidence in His mercy and compassion. He desires our trust that He is in charge of our life, His church, the world, and that He will bring great blessings.

His beautiful promise in Lamentations 3:22-24 is a bulwark for us when we are confronted with alarming fears:

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in Him.”

Fear is not unique to our present existence. St. Paul had to remind young Pastor Timothy 2,000 years ago that “God gave us a spirit *not of fear* but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7). I am convinced that when we allow fear to control us, then we are allowing the devil to manipulate us. This should not be!

Our God gives us a new start, a second chance and a bold hope because His mercies are guaranteed to us fresh and new each morning! Wow! What a way to start a brand new year ... and a brand new day!

May you have a very blessed, joy-filled, bold and exciting new year of God’s grace!

Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come! Amen!

Congrats!

We rejoice with those in the Oklahoma District who are celebrating anniversaries of **50 years** or more!

Adair, Bethlehem

Louie and Bettye Thiems
62 years, Jan. 25

Bartlesville, Redeemer

Jerry and Judie Page,
61 years, Jan. 14
Steve and Sharon Emert
51 years, Jan. 23

Edmond, Holy Trinity

Robert and Rose Renner
57 years, Jan. 1
John and Jeri Parkinson
50 years, Jan. 8

Enid, St. Paul's

James and Marilyn Hoeltzel
58 years, Jan. 26

Norman, Trinity

Jim and Lois Bollinger,
56 years, Jan. 2

Okarche, St. John's

Gerald and Lucy Beecher
53 years, Jan. 4

Oklahoma City, Messiah

Tim and Marilyn Parker
67 years, Jan. 29

Ponca City, First

Glenn and Nancy Hildebrand
61 years, Jan. 20

Belated

Ponca City, First

Joe and Ann Banks
69 years, Dec. 10

Watonga, Mount Calvary

Leroy and Ruth Lages
64 years, Dec. 21

Shawnee, Redeemer



David and Carolyn Watson
59 years, Jan. 11

Broken Arrow, Trinity



Bill and Sue Pahmeier
62 years, Jan. 1

Alva, Zion



Harvey and Shirley Schuessler
61 years, Dec. 30



Corky and Esther McIver
54 years, Dec. 1

Happy Birthday

Celebrating **90 years** or more...

Bartlesville, Redeemer

Art Radke
92 years, Jan. 31

Covington, St. John's

Martin Carl
91 years, Jan. 11

Enid, St. Paul's

Marcella Schroeder
92 years, Jan. 13

Norman, Trinity

Grace Roley
94 years, Jan. 22

Okarche, St. John's

Bobbie Brandley
99 years, Jan. 14

Oklahoma City, Messiah

Winona Koutz
90 years, Jan. 9

Quinta Schubkegel
95 years, Jan. 25

Loris Wiersig
91 years, Jan. 29

Tulsa, Christ the Redeemer

Marie Grassman
91 years, Jan. 8

Fairland, St. Paul's



Vivian Spencer
90 years, Jan. 4

Belated

Covington, St. John's

Bob Falls
91 years, Dec. 3

Ponca City, First

Buddy Klumpp
91 years, Dec. 31.

Lorene Stalcup
93 years, Dec. 24

Share your news with us!

We are always in need of more submissions for the Oklahoma District insert of *The Lutheran Witness*. Your submissions help remind us of what God is doing around the district. They are also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. Finally, they remind each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events, installations, events from your men's or women's group, servant events, conferences, anniversaries, church renovations or additions, and much more. If you would like an upcoming event publicized, please make sure we have the information at least two months in advance.

Please send submissions to Janice Hedrick at jhedrickokdistrict@gmail.com. You may also mail your submissions to Janice at P.O. Box 70, Owasso, OK 74055 (918-629-1225).

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.

The deadline for the March 2022 issue is Jan. 15.



CONTINUING THE 'LONG CHAIN' OF PASTORS

“It’s not really a question of need,” Vicar Mark Gaschler said. “It’s a question of great joy, of great opportunity that we have, that God has called men to go out and to bring out His Gospel.”

Gaschler, a student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is the 32nd vicar to serve at Trinity, Norman, under the supervision of Rev. David Nehrenz.

Gaschler is learning how to be a pastor at an LCMS congregation with a long history of vicarage programs. The work he does covers the gamut of pastoral ministry, such as visiting a shut-in member and teaching a campus ministry Bible study for students at neighboring Oklahoma University.

Pastor Nehrenz recalled the influence of his supervising pastor when he was a vicar. “I love being a vicarage supervisor because you’re part of a long chain of continuing to raise up pastors for the next generation. I was influenced by my vicarage supervisor, and now God is using me to influence other young men who want to be pastors.”

In the upcoming Spring 2022 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, you can read more about Trinity and other LCMS congregations that are helping form men for the pastoral ministry. Among other goals, the Synod’s *Set Apart to Serve* initiative, led by Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck, seeks to reverse the trend of declining seminary enrollment over the next 15 years.

The initiative is not merely “about recruiting bodies to fill the various offices of the church,” Baneck said. “Rather, [Set Apart to Serve] seeks to form pastors and church workers to [pass] on the Christian faith from one generation to the next until our Savior’s return.”

This article is reprinted from the January 2022 Reporter (story and photos by Erik M. Lunsford/LCMS Communications).



▲ Rev. David Nehrenz (left), senior pastor and vicarage supervisor at Trinity, Norman, Okla., reviews an upcoming preschool chapel service with Vicar Mark Gaschler.



▶ Gaschler reads Scripture with Trinity member Barbara Beall.



▼ Gaschler reads Genesis during the weekly LCMS U gathering at Oklahoma University.