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Communications

"...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." ~ 1 Peter 3:15

The NJ District website at www.njdistrict.org is mobile-friendly, and contains links to important district ministries, contact information for all district staff, how to find district congregations & schools, resources for pastors, workers, and lay people, and links to give/donate to district missions & ministries. We average 500+ unique visitors each week; most visitors seek contact info, district calendar, and special events or news/blog items.

Two weekly electronic newsletters. Along with a number of other occasional updates to targeted sub-groups, district newsletters are sent to subscriber lists totaling 1459 individuals:

- *Servant to Servant* - for pastors, rostered workers, and congregational presidents. Includes important updates from the District President and district staff.
- *The Grapevine* - for anyone interested in district & congregational news and updates. Subscribe at www.tinyurl.com/njdnewsletters.

Social Media. The NJ District Facebook (@njdistrict), Twitter (@njdistrict), and Instagram (@njdistrict) accounts are the most active. Most popular features are the free graphics for Advent and Lent/Holy Week/Easter that are made available to all district congregations for use on their social media channels, and an annual photo-a-day "Advent Calendar" that is shared on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, with individual participants tagging their photos with the hashtag #njdadvent.

Consultations with congregations, pastors, and circuit meetings. I am very happy to serve as a pair of "friendly critical" eyes, with the goal of improving & strengthening your congregation's digital ministry. I can provide a fresh look at your congregation's website and social media presence, as well as print materials, to help you communicate more effectively with congregational members and with your surrounding community. People in your community are already connecting with one another via social media. Join the conversation that's already taking place, and be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you!

Christian Education

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. ~ Psalm 78:1-4

The following numbers represent the total reported enrollment in Christian education programs (Sunday school, youth group) for NJ District congregations in 2015-2016:

- 3 years old & under: 71
- 4 years old through 4th grade: 257
- 5th through 8th grade: 141
- 9th through 12th grade: 60

Congregations, facing the challenges of fewer children, increasingly disconnected families, and diminished volunteer rosters, are seeking renewal and rebirth of a Christian education ministry that shares the Gospel with children, youth, and families in practical, life-shaping and life-sharing ways. There is no perfect curriculum that will do this for you, and no "magic bullet" solution to this challenge. God's Word alone is our source of power and the content of our faith. God's Word alone is our

hope for renewal and rebirth as we face these challenges. “I did nothing; I let the Word do its work,” wrote Martin Luther, reflecting on his role in the Reformation. “I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philipp and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.... For it is almighty, and takes captive the hearts, and when the hearts are captured the work will fall of itself” (*The Second Sermon, March 10, 1522*).

Annual Resource Sharing & Training. Seven to twelve congregations attended the annual Children, Youth, and Family Ministry event in 2015, 2016 and 2017. At this event, various “home-centered, church-supported” models of ministry were shared, and free resources made available for parent-supported confirmation ministry, outreach-focused VBS, and intergenerational service learning. Ongoing discussions are held and free resources made available on the “Home-Centered, Church-Supported Ministry” group on Facebook (join here: www.facebook.com/groups/njdfamilyfriendly).

Youth Ministry. As the number of youth in our congregations dwindles, so too, does the number of youth connected to district wide youth ministry programs. The district did not host a Winter Youth Gathering in 2018 for the first time in decades. However, new models and ministry opportunities are being born. The first-ever NJ District “Mystery Bus Tour” (August 2017) included 45 participants from six congregations. Regional youth ministry collectives are being explored, as congregations work together to build relationships and strengthen support networks among Lutheran youth and their families. The potential for dual-parish or multi-parish directors of Christian education (DCE) or Christian outreach (DCO) is great, and would be a huge support to our pastors as they seek to lead our congregations in these areas.

Please stop by the Youth Ministry table in the exhibitors’ hall to pick up free resources, and get the latest info on the 2019 National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis.

Congregational Consultations. Working with a congregation’s pastor and Christian education team, I have been able to provide curriculum review and support, and program planning helps for Sunday school, VBS, confirmation, youth, and adult education programs. I would love to meet with your congregation’s team.

Please let me know how I can be of service to you in the areas of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry, as we seek together to tell the coming generations the glorious deeds of the Lord, and the wonders He has done for us in Christ.