



Lutheran
Family Service

For Nothing is Impossible with God

THE

Good News LETTER

www.lutheranfamilyservice.org

Fall 2025

Growing By God's Grace

New Counseling Office Extends Christ-Centered Care in South Dakota



The city of Aberdeen will soon be home to a new source of hope and healing. This fall, Lutheran Family Service is opening a new counseling office, bringing professional and Christ-centered support to individuals and families across northeast South Dakota.

A community outreach of the LCMS churches in South Dakota, LFS relies on the support of caring Christians — with no government funding — ensuring its service remains rooted in Christ.

someone when it was apparent that this person had needs beyond my skills. I've also had parents seeking help for their child and wanted a counselor who was based in true biblical understanding. The RGI sought to find ways to help, and we are able and excited to have LFS join us in Aberdeen. We look forward to a successful venture and pray for God's continued blessings and guidance."

The new office is located inside St. Paul's Lutheran Church in

downtown Aberdeen. Services available at the new location — and throughout South Dakota via telehealth — include professional mental health counseling, marriage and family support, pregnancy counseling, and adoption services; as well as seminars, support groups, and online resources.

With existing locations in Sioux Falls, Deadwood, and Rapid City, LFS adds the Aberdeen office to its network, further expanding care across South Dakota.



The new office comes to Aberdeen through a partnership with the Rural Gospel Initiative (RGI), a group of 14 LCMS congregations supporting regional outreach. Rev. Bret Bierman, pastor at St. John (Aberdeen), St. Paul (Stratford), and Trinity (Mansfield), and RGI board member, shared his enthusiasm for the partnership:

"Pastors wear many hats, but very few are trained counselors. There have been times in counseling sessions with

Meet the team!

Dreena Wertz LPC
Licensed Professional Counselor



Dreena Wertz will be serving the new Aberdeen office. With degrees from Northern State and South Dakota State Universities, Dreena works with a wide variety of issues and served at a community mental health center prior to LFS.

"I enjoy being able to walk alongside people and give them hope as they navigate life's struggles. This partnership with RGI provides a connection with pastors and the community, and I look forward to seeing how God works through me and this ministry at LFS." ▼

Called to Service

Welcoming Faith Muehler and introducing *RISE Together* School Counseling

Children in schools today carry more than just backpacks and pencils. Many walk into classrooms carrying invisible burdens. These burdens could be anxiety about home life, pressure from peers, confusion about their emotions, or spiritual questions that bring doubt or confusion. Together with you, we care deeply about their well-being; and that of their parents, teachers, and pastors.

At God's leading, Lutheran schools sought partnership to better serve students, parents, and staff. Through LFS, a called Deaconess now walks alongside Trinity, Cedar Rapids, and Central Lutheran, Newhall — bringing care and encouragement to their school communities.

Deaconess Faith Muehler was installed into this new position by pastors Daryn Bahn and Ted Groth on August 17 at Trinity, Cedar Rapids.



Deaconess Faith, a recent graduate of Concordia University Chicago, is already developing the relationships God will use to carry out this ministry. She explains her call this way:

"As a deaconess in this role, I have the opportunity to walk alongside families offering Christ-centered care and practical resources. Amidst any noise or pressure they face, I get to remind them of their identity in Christ and the immeasurable, unshakeable hope found in Him."



The program, **RISE Together** (standing for Resilient, Insightful, Strong, Equipped), is rooted in Scripture and encouragement, and represents the framework



RISE Together

for our school counseling. It gives students practical skills to meet challenges in healthy ways; and reminds them that they are loved, valued, and never outside the care of their Creator.

In both classrooms and congregations, may we continue to walk alongside our children, helping them to **RISE Together**. Thank you for your support, and prayers for Deaconess Faith and those who will be touched by God through Faith's work during the coming year!

"I praise God that I can be a part of their support system, helping in any way I can to point them to Christ – who takes on every burden." 🙏



Deaconess Faith Muehler

School Ministry And Care
Iowa District East

Scheduling: 563-359-0696
FMuehler@LutheranFamilyService.org

Recent Adoption Spotlights



Gia's adoption almost didn't happen. In the span of several days, her parents Tyler & Laura experienced a very turbulent ride, where some days things were moving forward, and some days it seemed like everything might fall apart — due to multiple complications. Trusting God's plan, Gia's adoption was ultimately finalized, and she was baptized shortly thereafter.



Della's parents, Josh and Jessica, have been over-whelmed with gratitude for the way God lovingly prepared their hearts long before they even understood why. "To finalize Della's adoption is to witness God's faithfulness in action. It's not just a legal milestone, but a reflection of the seeds He planted long ago, and how He gently brought them to life in His perfect timing."

Madelyn began her life as a cryogenically-frozen embryo years ago. She was just recently born to her new parents through our embryo adoption program, designed to help match adopting families with parents who donated remaining embryos following successful IVF (in vitro fertilization). Madelyn is a healthy baby girl, deeply loved and fully cherished by her parents, Scott and Melanie.



Emmett's birthmother started working with LFS shortly after she learned she was pregnant. The placement did not play out as planned, thanks to an emergency C-section, a helicopter ride for Emmett to a larger hospital, and a 29-day stay in the NICU. Today there are no long-term concerns with Emmett's health, and he is happily growing and thriving in his loving, Christian home.



Stay Informed

Sign up to receive updates on webinars, online support groups, and Christ-centered digital resources addressing today's most pressing issues at: lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact

Happy Retirement!

This summer we celebrated the retirements of Wendy Solawetz, LMFT (left photo in white) with 25 years of counseling experience, and Clinical Director Toni Larson, LISW (right photo) after 47 years of ministry. Both were honored with celebrations among colleagues, family, and friends; and we wish them God's blessings in their next chapters. ♥



Adding Ministry Partners, Paying It Forward To Pastors

We're celebrating the success of our first **Grow With Us, Go With Us** initiative! 27 congregations raised up at least 10 new Lutheran Family Service partners each, providing financial support to expand Christ-centered mental health care and pastoral support across Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, North and South Dakota.



Pastor Isaiah Armbricht of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Manchester, Iowa enjoying a night out with his wife, Audrey

As a token of gratitude, each congregation received a gift card to present to their pastor for a night out — reminding pastors that they are truly cherished, deeply cared for, and surrounded by a community that values their faithful service.

Through this effort, God provided new connections, expanded support, and strengthened bonds between congregations and their shepherds. Thank you to every partner who joined us! ♥

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS Lutheran Family Service?

Bismarck, ND



4/5/25 We hosted "Cheesecake Chats" in Bismarck and West Fargo to share plans to bring Christian mental health services to the state of North Dakota.

Norfolk, NE



4/9/25 LFS was represented at the Lutheran High Northeast Career Fair, presenting to students a workplace where they can openly be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Chamberlain, SD



4/25/25 Dr. Mark & Cathy Vande Braak heard so many wonderful stories of adoption from ladies at the 2025 LWML South Dakota District Spring Retreat.

Waverly, IA



4/26/25 The Iowa District East LWML Westgate Zone Grief Committee hosted Rev. Nathan Grewe's presentation on grieving and loss at St. John in Waverly.

Draper, SD



6/22/25 At a recent "LFS Sunday," our Rev. Mick Wolfram had triple the fun in South Dakota at Zion in Presho, St. Paul in Draper, and Messiah in Murdo.

Concordia, MO



5/23/25 Counselor Ruth Barz spoke at the Mission Of Christ Network training in Missouri for the new missionary partners who are heading out into the field.

Hinton, IA



5/8/25 Cassie Beltz and Rev. Jonathan Conner addressed creation, gender, and identity with a group of pastors at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hinton.

Hartley, IA



4/29/25 Rev. Alex Post represented our Congregational Outreach team, leading discussion about end-of-life care with St. Paul Lutheran Church members.

Fort Dodge, IA



6/23/25 Our entire counseling team spent two days with leaders from The Townsend Institute at Concordia University Irvine for a retreat to grow and recharge.

Omaha, NE



6/26/25 We had an absolute blast in Omaha at the 2025 LWML National Convention. We met so many women (and men) of Christ sharing in mission and fellowship.

Frankenmuth, MI



8/10/25 This was our first time attending and leading breakout sessions at Best Practices For Ministry Heartland, held at St. Lorenz Lutheran in Frankenmuth.

Aberdeen, SD



8/11/25 LFS was at the Brown County Fair in Aberdeen, South Dakota, joined by the Rural Gospel Initiative and Lutherans For Life, to announce our new office in town.

Gifts given in *Memory of Loved Ones*

Bill Baker

given by Joe & Mary Holmberg

Joyce Berkenpas

given by Dale & Ruth Bruhn

Karen Beutler

given by Debra Sletter

Ruby Brank

given by Ron & Carolyn Rubsam

Harvey Buckendahl

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

Roger Day

given by Joan Arnold
given by Lance & Paula Olson

Milly Ewoldt

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

Bernice Gade

given by Joel & Cindy Jaeger

Rev. Dale Glawatz

given by Darwin & Marlys Luedtke

Bruce Gunderson

given by Kerry & Keri Burmeister
given by Lance & Paula Olson

Duane Haerther

given by David Haerther
given by Marguerite Haerther
given by Stephen & Sandra Siepman

Erma Juergensen

given by Mike & Carol Christensen

Ed Krock

given by Brent & Debbie Pladna

Leonard Kroemer

given by Brent & Debbie Pladna

Joyce Kruse

given by Dale & Ruth Bruhn

Kenneth Lamb

given by Rev. Jim & Roxanne Lamb

Mark Meyer

given by Joan Arnold
given by Kerry & Keri Burmeister

Marvin Meyer

given by Lance & Paula Olson

Delores Miller

given by Linda Goodson
given by Keith Leinbach
given by Treva Lichti
given by Lynn & Marna Lugibill
given by Ted & Laura Pohl
given by Jane Zongker

Shirley Moench

given by Joan Arnold
given by Kerry & Keri Burmeister
given by Lonnie Kirchhoff
given by Lance & Paula Olson
given by Mildred Torkelson

Brian Newsum

given by Steve & Judy Rozek

Rebecca Rassler

given by Dale & Nancy Bruns

Roxanne Scharf

given by Kerry & Keri Burmeister

Esther Schlesselman

given by Craig & Lynnette Aschinger
given by Ken & Markie Hays

Carroll Vik

given by Mildred Torkelson

Paulette Waech

given by Stacy & Patty Thomas

Albert & Shirley Wenck

given by Karen Wernimont

Gracia Willis

given by Marlene Glasnapp

Delmar Zinnel

given by Kerry & Keri Burmeister

Gifts given in *Honor*

Daughter Through Adoption

given by Greg & Kelly Smith

**Darrold & Donna Lindstrom 60th
Wedding Anniversary**

given by Duane & Karen Ploeger

If you would like to give a gift in memory or honor of someone special, please visit lutheranfamilyservice.org and click "Donate" at the top of the screen.



A Week In The Life

Coming soon to your
mailbox, look for our
2025 Year-End Appeal



Lutheran Family Service
409 Kenyon Rd, Ste. C
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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If you or someone you know is in need of Christ-centered mental wellness, marriage & family counseling, unplanned pregnancy support, or adoption services, reach out to us today.

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