

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN SCHOOL

PRESCHOOL • ELEMENTARY SCHOOL • MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Ministry of Concordia Lutheran Church

Concordia Lutheran,

As the new principal I wanted to provide an update on our school and some of our moving parts to our congregation. Concordia Lutheran School has been blessed by an extremely supportive congregation which has allowed for longevity to be such a positive for our school teaching staff. Unfortunately, for me as the new principal but a blessing for them, several of our staff are looking at retirement this year and in the near future. Due to this, we are working to create the next wave of longevity when these retirements happen.

This year we will see the retirements of Mr. Steve Grim and Mrs. Angie Owen. Along with that Mr. Micah Rauch has left this year and Miss Rebecca Grim will be leaving her classroom at the end of the year. With this change some internal movement is happening as well. Ms. Megan Hunt is moving into the role of Early Childhood Director from the second grade classroom and Mrs. Chelsi Thatcher is moving from the kindergarten classroom to bless our students in the art classroom.

Along with changes from retirements and moves comes changes in needs for our students and families. One of the bigger needs our teachers have noticed, and one that was brought up in the voters meeting for the Shepherd of the School position, is more counseling and mentoring for our students. With the ministry opportunity growing to welcome in a wider range of students with a wider range of backgrounds, this is an opportunity to share Christ while providing a service that is needed. The more we can do in-house, the more we can ensure that counseling and mentoring be done in a Christ-centered and Gospel-oriented way that brings hope to our students.

As the administration and call committees looked at these opening positions, and those to open in the future, we identified needs of getting younger as a staff, congregation involvement by new staff, youth ministries, counseling, and buy-in to the vision of Concordia Lutheran Church & School. This was our guiding focus as we began looking for candidates to fill our needed positions. The committee settled on three candidates as great fits, and in full transparency, all three are candidates I know and have varying degrees of experience with in other schools. The positions we are looking are:

1. Middle School Teacher, Counseling/Mentoring, Youth Director
2. Second Grade Teacher
3. First Grade Teacher
4. Kindergarten Teacher

Mr. Michael Yurk is a DCE with a minor in counseling and has a certificate in mental health that allows him to do base level counseling and mentoring. He has taught middle school classes and led a growing Youth program that starts as young as preschool and continues through high school graduation at Faith Lutheran Church & School in Eustis, Florida. He has also taught Bible Classes, leads children's messages in church, runs the church screens, oversees Sunday School, teaches catechism in school and to the public school students, and has led the way in introducing a new family-centered church

opportunity with a contemporary service. He is unique as he has teaching experience, a mental health certificate, and experience building youth programs.

Mrs. Amanda Yurk is a dynamic kindergarten teacher who has worked in large public schools and now, through the colloquy program, is a rostered Lutheran teacher. Beyond her excellent work in the classroom, Mrs. Yurk has assisted in running Christmas programs, coached basketball, helped run athletic programs for students in 1st - 4th grade, and has volunteered to assist in other family engagement school programs. In the congregation, Mrs. Yurk is the substitute organist for the music director, plays in the handbell choir, and has assisted in accompaniment for many musical offerings for the church and school. I served alongside Mr. and Mrs. Yurk as principal as we worked together in ministry in Florida.

Miss Jessica Zehendner is a first year teacher in York, Nebraska. I have known Jessica since she was young as her mother was and is a math teacher at Heartland Lutheran High School where I served my first administrative call from 2012-2020. After Jessica graduated from Heartland Lutheran High School in 2021 she went to Concordia University Nebraska graduating in 2025 as their top Early Childhood Education student. Her first call has presented difficulties and has not been a great fit for her in the congregation, therefore she was open to interviewing.

The call committee has interviewed another possible candidate that they were comfortable with, but would like to interview at least one more candidate that I am working on scheduling now. Both of these possible candidates are at Concordia University Wisconsin and are currently student teaching.

As a Call Committee, we believe these candidates will fill our needs and accomplish our goals of adding younger teachers to create longevity, congregational involvement, counseling/mentoring help, and buy-in to our vision of knowing Christ and making Him known. It is our prayerful hope that the Lord leads Mr. Yurk, Mrs. Yurk, and Miss Zehendner to join our congregation and staff next year. It is also our prayer to be calling our voters together again before long to issue a call for our last current open position.

I want to thank you all for your support of the mission of Concordia Lutheran School and your faithfulness in prayer for the teachers and staff I am blessed to work with each and every day as a part of the ministries of Concordia Lutheran Church & School.

In Christ and For Concordia,

Timothy Leech