

December 2022

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IN TOUCH

A publication of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
The Lutheran Witness Michigan District, LCMS Supplement

HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

Always Look for Jesus in the Word

by Rev. David A. Davis

“And the Word became flesh” (John 1:14)
A... We celebrate at this time of year that God, according to His faithful promises, sent His salvation into the world through the person of Jesus, the Christ. Our ears revel in the glorious words:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in

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IN TOUCH

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the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1–5, 14).

God's Word continues to come through the Scriptures, the Word of God, as we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). And also, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39).

Let's do that. Let's continue in His Word. Let's search the Scriptures.

Does this capture your imagination? What would happen if thousands of us, tens of thousands of us read through the entire Bible in 2023? Would that change us? Would that draw us closer to Jesus? Would that make us clearer on God's love, grace, mercy, wisdom? Would that give us something to talk about with our neighbors, friends, and relatives?

Do not receive this as some sort of command, a function of the Law. Receive it as an invitation, like when Jesus said, "Take and eat" (Matthew 26:26 NIV) or like when Ananias invited Saul, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16).

Consider these three items as, together, we build an ethic of Bible reading.

First, always look for Jesus. The Bible is Christocentric—it centers around Jesus. Too often when we approach the Scriptures we start with questions like "What does this mean to me?" or "What is this saying about me?" Remember, the Bible is not about you; it is about Jesus. We should lead with the question, "What is this passage telling me about or helping me to understand about Jesus?"

For instance, when we read about Job, or Esther, or David when he slew Goliath, we should not first think about how those accounts compare to our lives, but rather how they compare to Jesus'. He went through horrific suffering and was restored. He came at just the right time to save His people. He stands in and rescues His brothers from death. Certainly, these accounts apply to us, but they point to Jesus.

Second, don't stop starting. Some of you reading this are thinking, "I tried that before, but I ended up quitting." Somewhat like the advice given to smokers who want to quit—"Don't quit quitting"—when it comes to reading through the Bible, don't stop starting. "I started before but didn't make it." Well, start again.

Here are a few helps:

- Find a partner to encourage you.
- Find a reading schedule that alternates between Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalm passages.
- Set aside a consistent time of day.
- Worship weekly (the serendipitous connections to what you read at home that week will motivate you to continue your reading schedule).

“... when it comes to reading through the Bible, don't stop starting.”

The Word Became Flesh
 1 In the beginning was Word,^a and the Word was God,^b and the Word was with God in the beginning.^d
 2 He was with God in the beginning.^d
 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made; what has been made

“ Each year we are at a different place in life and different passages will apply in a way they had not before. Each year we will gain more than an abundance of biblical truths; we will gain a more intimate relationship with Jesus and the life He has for us. ”

Third, don't be discouraged if you do not fully understand—or even agree with—everything that you read. Reading the Scriptures is an encounter with God; of course, you will not understand everything about Him. There will always be a hiddenness about Him this side of eternity. Keep in mind also that we are sinful and fallible; our mind will not be fully aligned with His. However, we look to His word to change our thinking—not the other way around. Reading the Bible and different difficult portions of it make us, like Jacob, wrestle with God. In the midst of the wrestling is blessing.

And then what? What if thousands of us successfully complete reading through the Bible in 2023? What next? Let's do it again the next year. Each year we will see something we missed or were not ready to understand before. Each year we are at a different place in life and different passages will apply in a way they had not before. Each year we will gain more than

an abundance of biblical truths; we will gain a more intimate relationship with Jesus and the life He has for us. He prayed, “*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John 17:3 NIV).

One more thing: plan now to attend our Theological Conference: *The Word Works, Building an Ethic of Bible Reading*. It will be held on Saturday, February 4, 2023, at Our Savior, Lansing. For more information, or to register, visit michigandistrict.org/theo23.

May that same Savior who came in the flesh through the Virgin Mary continue to come to you through your diligent engagement with the Scriptures. ■



Rev. David A. Davis serves as President of the Michigan District, LCMS.

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word,^a and the Word was with God,^b and the Word was God.^c

2 He was with God in the beginning.^d

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made; that has been made.^e

1:1
a Rev 19:13
b Jn 17:5;
1 Jn 1:2
c Php 2:6
1:2
d Ge 1:1
1:3
e 1 Co 8:6;
Col 1:16
Heb 1:2
1:4
4 In Jn 5:2
11:25

Where There's *Smoke* There's *Fire*

by Paul R. Naumann





Many Christians have bemoaned how early Christmas celebrating begins in our commercialized culture. In the stores, and in the front yards of many of our neighbors, as soon as the Halloween decorations come down the Christmas decorations go up. Round the clock Christmas music can be heard on satellite radio in early November, and frankly I've began listening to it in the car myself since before Thanksgiving. But if we're honest about it, not many Christians are enamored with Advent music. With the exception of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," I think it's safe to say that most of us would much rather sing Christmas songs like "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night" than Advent songs like "When All the World Was Cursed."

But the fact is we all need preparation for Christmas that goes beyond decorating and shopping. We need the time of spiritual preparation that Advent provides us so that we will truly appreciate God's gift to the world in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the nature of gifts. If someone gives you, for example, a golf range finder and you don't play golf, you're not going to appreciate it. But if you are an avid golfer who struggles to know how far from the pin you are on your approach shots, if someone gets you a really nice range finder (hint, hint), you'll really appreciate the gift and be very grateful for it.

When you go Christmas shopping for jewelry, and the jewelers want to display for you an exquisite diamond bracelet, they always set it against a dark background so that it really stands out. The dark backdrop for God's gift of the "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:46) is our sin. When we know we're sinners, as Luther put it, "lost and condemned creatures," then we appreciate it when we get a Savior from sin in the person of Jesus Christ. But if we don't know we're sinners, we won't appreciate the forgiveness that comes only on account of God's holy Son making a personal appearance into our sinful world and living the righteous life for us that God demands, and then suffering the eternal death penalty we deserve for our sinfulness so that we do not have to ourselves.

So Advent is a penitential season not unlike Lent. It's a time to appreciate how much we need the Savior whose birth we excitedly celebrate at Christmas. Advent is a time of waiting, longing, and deliberately delaying the full-blown joy of Christ's coming into our world. But I must admit, over the years I've not been

“ We need the time of spiritual preparation that Advent provides us so that we will *truly appreciate* God's gift to the world in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. ”

a big stickler about postponing Christmas decorating and songs in worship. While I do like to delay it for a couple Sundays in Advent, by the time we get to our third Wednesday night Advent service, it's historically been our particularly musical one in which we pretty well pull out all the stops. I've found that people welcome and appreciate that, maybe especially in these troubled times in which "we need a little Christmas, right this very minute."

But the fact is, we need a little Advent too. If we put ourselves through a little pain on purpose, delaying our gratification for a time of quiet contemplation, it is indeed a good thing for us spiritually. One way we do this is by imagining ourselves back in the Old Testament. In our Advent Bible readings, we tend to give particular attention to the ancient prophets who anticipated the coming of the Messiah long before He appeared. Readings from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah help us to that. Even though John the Baptist is in the New Testament, his message and ministry was one of pointing to the Lamb of God who was yet to come (albeit very soon).

When we do this, we're finding Jesus in the Old Testament, which may surprise some people. But Jesus Himself said that the entire Old Testament is about Him (John 5:31). So that means not only are certain

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Why *Christmas* is for Joyless People

by Garrick S. Beckett

“ He came full of grace—full of joy—for you ...
Because you—yes, broken as you are—give Him joy.” ”

I used to despise Christmas. Not the church season *per se*, but the incessant joy of the season. I found it annoying that people were just “unnecessarily” filled with perpetual glee with the Christmas pop music playing on repeat, and especially with the commercialization of the holy feast day of Christmas.

My aversion for Christmas began in the midst of a severe depression that stretched from my childhood well into adulthood. From experiencing racism at an early age, to constant bullying, to my parents’ divorce, and no prescription of the Gospel, I seldom had joy in my life. It also didn’t help that my parents’ divorce was finalized just one month before Christmas, so Christmas was never the same since then. I even tried to selfishly rationalize it with, “At least I’ll have two Christmases!” But that didn’t work. There were no more Christmas traditions, no more mom *and* dad, and the divorce fundamentally changed each of us children. Our family was **broken**. This sent me even deeper into my depression, to the point that I had a plan to commit suicide.

Fast forward to when I became Lutheran and the Lord slowly (and I mean *slowly*) worked on me through my depression.

It was through His Word and Sacraments that I realized I was constantly inward focused—what Luther calls *enthusiasm*; that I was looking to *my* fruits in repentance (i.e., good works) and *my* ability to have an emotional experience for assurance. The Lord brought me to look *extra nos*—outside myself—and toward Christ and *His* good and perfect work on the cross, and *His* joy to be our Savior. When I had previously looked to myself and my vain efforts for assurance of salvation, the Lord made it clear that assurance is based on the efficacy of His spoken Word, especially in those wonderful words of the Sacrament, “Given and shed *for you*.” As Luther comments, Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine that are “*accompanied by the Word ... are the treasure through which such forgiveness is obtained. This treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words ‘given and shed for you’*” (LC Part 5, 28–29).

And *there* is the joy at Christmas: Christmas is about **Christ for you**.

He came *full* of grace—full of joy—for you. His cup of grace—His joy for you—overflows. Even when you doubt. Even when you doubt, God still has joy in you! Why does God give you this grace? Because it gives Him joy. Because you—yes, broken as you are—give Him joy. Not because of anything you have done, but what Christ has done for you. By virtue of being baptized into His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, you are His son, His daughter (Romans 6:3–11).

You can have joy this Christmas because **Christ is for you, always**; and therefore you can sing, with true joy, the Christmas hymn:

My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradlesong:

Glory to God in highest heav’n,
Who unto us His Son has giv’n!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth. ■

LSB #358 From *Heaven Above to Earth I Come* (stzs. 14–15)

Rev. Garrick S. Beckett is Associate Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Mount Pleasant and campus ministry pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Chapel at Central Michigan University. Pastor Beckett served 3 years in the Army before attending CUAA and Concordia Seminary. He is married to Emilia, who emigrated from Finland. He enjoys writing poetry, short stories, reading, and photography.



Christmas Appeal 2022

Dear Friends in Christ:

Greetings to you as you prepare for the coming of the Christ Child and the return of the King! May God bless your household this Adventide with ever greater faith and confidence in the Gift that is Jesus.

As you know, Scripture teaches God is love. As you also know at the very heart, the core of love is grace. An alternate way to express the word grace is gift. So indeed, from the love of God we receive the gift of Jesus and the Kingdom He gives.

In our work together in the Michigan District, a top priority must be raising up future workers and leaders for Kingdom outreach. To that end, I want to ask you to consider making a year-end gift to our District's church worker scholarship fund. Certainly, you are fielding many such appeals as 2022 draws to a close. As you prayerfully decide where you might direct such a gift, let me point out the lasting—even unto eternity—impact of a gift to our church worker scholarship fund. Your contribution will serve to prepare young people to devote their lives for Gospel ministry.

This fund is already doing much. Over the past ten years, we at the Michigan District have been able to increase our scholarship levels from just a few hundred dollars a year to \$3,000 for seminary students and \$2,400 for students at Concordia University Ann Arbor or Wisconsin who are in a church worker degree program. Students attending other Concordia University System schools receive \$1,800 for the school year. In total, the Michigan District Professional Church Worker Scholarship Program gave \$200,025 in scholarships for the 2022-2023 school year, helping a total of 71 students.

Here are comments from a few of them ...

“Thank you so much for your continuing support ... I am excited to go into Lutheran teaching and serve our little ones in their learning and growth in faith. I love being at Concordia (AA) because of the wonderful staff and opportunities that one can only find at a small school like this. Your contributions make it possible for students like myself to go to such an amazing school and get the preparation we need to enter the mission field. I hope to be able to make an impact on my future elementary students.” — Annalyse Auxter

“With my husband and I both being students at CTSFW, we want to thank you for the financial support that we've received. It's truly a blessing to have the assistance as we follow God's call. May God continue to bless our district as you are also blessed.” — Dan and Melissa Harrington and family





“Thank you for blessing me with a scholarship. I am extremely grateful for the assistance it provides in paying for my education. God has truly shown me that, when I trust in Him, He will provide for me. The gift you have given me is a part of that blessing. I am studying Family Life Ministry because of the impact the Director of Family Life Ministries at my church has had on my life. I was blessed by his wisdom and guidance throughout high school. I believe that God is calling me to share that blessing with the next generation and bring the good news of Jesus to as many families as I can. With each gift I receive, this calling becomes more evident and attainable for me. Thank you for your support.” — Zane Simon

“Thank you for your continued support of my seminary education. This year [2020] has brought a lot of changes, but our Lord Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. May God bless you and keep you safe and healthy.” — Brandon Bettcher

While we are grateful that together we have been able to do much, our goal is to do more. With your help in responding to this appeal, we will be able to give more and larger scholarships in the future.

And celebrate the greatest of all gifts:

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it” (Isaiah 9:6–7).

... eyes on Jesus...

Rev. David A. Davis, President
Michigan District, LCMS



Yes, President Davis, I would like to support future Professional Church Workers!

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of ___ \$500 ___ \$250 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$25 ___ Other

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Congregation/City _____

Please make checks payable to Michigan District, LCMS or provide credit card information below. Return completed form and check (if applicable).

Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____
(MasterCard, Visa, Discover, American Express, Diners Club)

Billing Address (if different from above) _____

Cardholder's Name (as it appears on the card) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

By signing this form, the card holder is authorizing the Michigan District, LCMS to debit their card.

Donate online at
michigandistrict.org/christmasappeal
or return to:

Attn: Development Department
Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105



DECEMBER 2022

Two CEF Employees Take On New Tasks, Titles

Church Extension Fund has been blessed to have many long-time employees stay with the organization. In fact, across 11 employees, there are over 200 years of combined service to the mission and ministry of CEF. Two of the newest employees, Andy Sohn and Zack Werner, have proven to be particularly adept in

the roles in which they serve. These two employees began their CEF careers in 2018 and 2020, respectively. Since their hiring, Andy and Zach have demonstrated a heart for the mission of CEF, commitment to CEF’s ministry partners, and a drive to ensure the ministry of CEF will continue well into the future.



*Andy Sohn
Vice President - Strategy & Marketing*

Andy Sohn was hired in July of 2018 as the Vice President - Marketing & Relations. His job responsibilities included designing and producing all of the digital and print materials, building and fostering relationships with churches, pastors, and investors, as well as planning and executing the CEF Fall Conference. Of Sohn, his supervisor CEO Jim Saalfeld states “Over the course of the four years Andy has been with the organization, his natural abilities have been on display in many ways. One attribute that I particularly noted in each of his performance reviews is that he is a strategic thinker. Andy excels at providing innovative ideas and thinking about how the ministry of CEF can continue into our changing future.” Because of this ability, Saalfeld added new responsibilities to Sohn’s job and changed his title to Vice President - Strategy & Marketing. “This new role will utilize the talents Andy has skillfully demonstrated as he continues to be a great asset of CEF as a whole.” Saalfeld said.



Zack Werner joined CEF in August of 2020 as the Accounting Manager. He was responsible for general accounting processes, daily cash receipts, and assisting the loan department with transactions and disbursements. He was also given the added responsibility of being one of the point persons for a software conversion that CEF undertook in 2022. His natural inclination to quickly understand and share his gained knowledge was evident early on. President John Bates says of Werner “Zack is just a rock-solid employee. He’s sharp, he learns quickly, and no tasks that we have given him have been too arduous or confounding. He has helped raise the standards of the finance department.” On his second anniversary with Church Extension Fund, Werner was promoted to Controller, and will be in charge of financial forecasting as well as expanded duties in CEF’s fiscal operations and reporting.

*Zack Werner
Controller*

The future is bright with these two dedicated servants helping to keep CEF relevant, innovative, and pro-active. Together with the rest of the staff at CEF, which Saalfeld likes to refer to as “Team CEF”, our goal is to always be a trusted ministry partner of our fellow Lutheran ministries in Michigan. Congratulations, Andy and Zack!



*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”
Ephesians 4:11-12*



Church Extension Fund

Church Extension Fund ■ Michigan District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-3098 ■ www.mi-cef.org
Offices: 800-242-3944

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LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LHM Partners with Satellite TV Network

Michigan District LCMS members may have read about the violent protests and mounting fatalities throughout Iran following the recent death of a 22-year-old woman who died while in police custody. These tragedies have sparked outcry across the country from angry women, girls, and a growing number of men who are demanding change so that their basic human rights will be honored.

Over the past several years, Lutheran Hour Ministries has partnered with SAT-7, the first and largest Middle East and North African satellite TV network, to co-produce programming that shines the light of Christ into not only Iran, but dozens of other countries throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. Many viewers watching these broadcasts are hearing about Christ for the first time. LHM is thankful for our ongoing media ministry partnership with SAT-7 that allows us to continue broadcasting messages of hope amid so much uncertainty and fear.

Considering these recent circumstances, you may be wondering what you can do to help.

First, we ask you to pray for Iran and its people. We know that only God can change hearts, so we continue to pray. Pray against violence and oppression. Pray for all the people

who have been impacted by these tragic events. Pray that the rights of Iran's women, children, and men will not be ignored and will be upheld. Pray for the Christians living in this region and for individuals who have not yet heard the Gospel.

Second, as a ministry focused on sharing the love of Christ with those who need to hear it, LHM is inspired by the Gospel to reach out to hurting people not only in this region, but throughout the world. By collaborating with partners like SAT-7 and identifying and equipping local laypeople who have a passion for the Gospel to build their presence and impact using specific strategies and tactics contextual to the culture and language in which they serve, LHM is uniquely poised to reach beyond those areas where Christ is already known. You can serve as a lifeline for the billions of people worldwide who have not yet experienced the transformative love of our Savior.

Visit lhm.org for more information.



LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

*Merry
Christmas!*

*From the
Lutheran Women's
Missionary League*



lwmlmichigan.org



Ribbon Cutting for GFAGC

On October 25, Gifts for All God’s Children hosted a ribbon cutting for their new facility located in the First Congregational Church in Rochester. GFAGC Executive Director Patti Jacques, its Board of Directors, volunteers, and distinguished guests from the City of Rochester were present to celebrate the day.

GFAGC provides gifts, tutoring, and summer camps for underserved children in Detroit. The outreach began in 1987 at Faith, Troy as an Advent ministry to aid underserved youth. The outreach expanded due to a growing number of people in churches, private and public schools, organizations, and businesses sponsoring children, making donations, or volunteering. Since 1987, more than 77,000 children have been served!

Along with the annual Christmas and Easter Basket outreach and summer camps, GFAGC’s tutoring program

has grown exponentially in person and online. This fall GFAGC began tutoring 2nd graders in the public school system on Tuesday afternoons. New volunteers are always welcomed, and you don’t need to be local—you can tutor a student online from anywhere in Michigan.



GFAGC will partner with Camp Restore Detroit for the weeklong service event “Love 4 Others We Are the Church,” July 23–26, 2023 in Detroit. Volunteers can spend the week at CRD or make day trips.

For more information on how you can serve or support GFAGC, visit giftsforallgodschildren.org.

Concordia Names New President



Erik P. Ankerberg, Ph.D., has accepted the Divine Call to serve as the next president of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA). He will begin his term on Jan. 9, 2023.

Ankerberg’s professional resume includes nearly 15 years of experience in leadership positions at Lutheran higher education institutions. He currently serves as provost of Concordia University Chicago and briefly led the institution on an interim basis in summer 2019. He has also served as provost of Concordia University Texas and assistant provost at Wisconsin Lutheran College. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from Marquette University and earned his B.A. from Concordia Chicago. He is currently pursuing pastoral ordination within the LCMS.

Ankerberg takes over for the Rev. Patrick Ferry, Ph.D., who led the university through the 2013 merge that has seen the Ann Arbor campus’ enrollment grow more than 75% within the past decade.

“I am humbled and honored to accept the Call to serve as President of CUWAA,” Ankerberg said in a statement. “This university has a long and rich history of serving Christ, the Church, and the wider world by providing a rigorous, Christ-centered education that forms each student’s mind, body, and spirit as preparation to find ‘uncommon’ ways to meet the needs of others.” Ankerberg is married to Jennifer, and they have two sons who are both in college.

Women’s Conference in Frankenmuth

St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth is hosting a women’s conference on Saturday, January 21, 2023. The conference



theme is *White as Snow* and features keynote speaker Sue Heimer. Heimer is an international speaker, author, counselor, and Bible teacher. She is the author of *When You Feel Like Screaming: Practical Help for Frustrated Moms*, and she has spoken on Focus on the Family, Intentional Living, and Family Life Radio. Her greatest passion is to encourage women to love and lean on God in every aspect of their lives.

Come and experience the life-changing power of Christ’s atoning work on the cross to carry with you into your homes, workplaces, and communities in 2023. Get ready to be impacted by the freeing power of forgiveness! As Isaiah 1:18 tells us “*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*”

Cost is \$39/person and includes a box lunch from the Bavarian Inn. Register at stlorenz.org/womens-conference for an incredible day filled with worship, two keynote sessions, numerous breakout sessions, and a boxed lunch provided by the Bavarian Inn.

LCMS Church Worker Recruitment

Set Apart to Serve (SAS) is an initiative to recruit church workers. Through SAS, the LCMS is intentionally working to identify, encourage, and form future church workers for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ until His return. Parents/grandparents, pastors, professional church workers, Sunday school teachers, and others in your congregation help influence children to consider serving the church in these sacred and joyful vocations. Since church work is rooted in Baptism and a lifetime of hearing the Word, SAS encourages young people to consider church work vocations primarily through their continued and faithful involvement with their congregation. To learn more, visit lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

Through Set Apart to Serve, the LCMS is intentionally working to identify, encourage and form future church workers for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ until His return. Visit lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve to learn more.



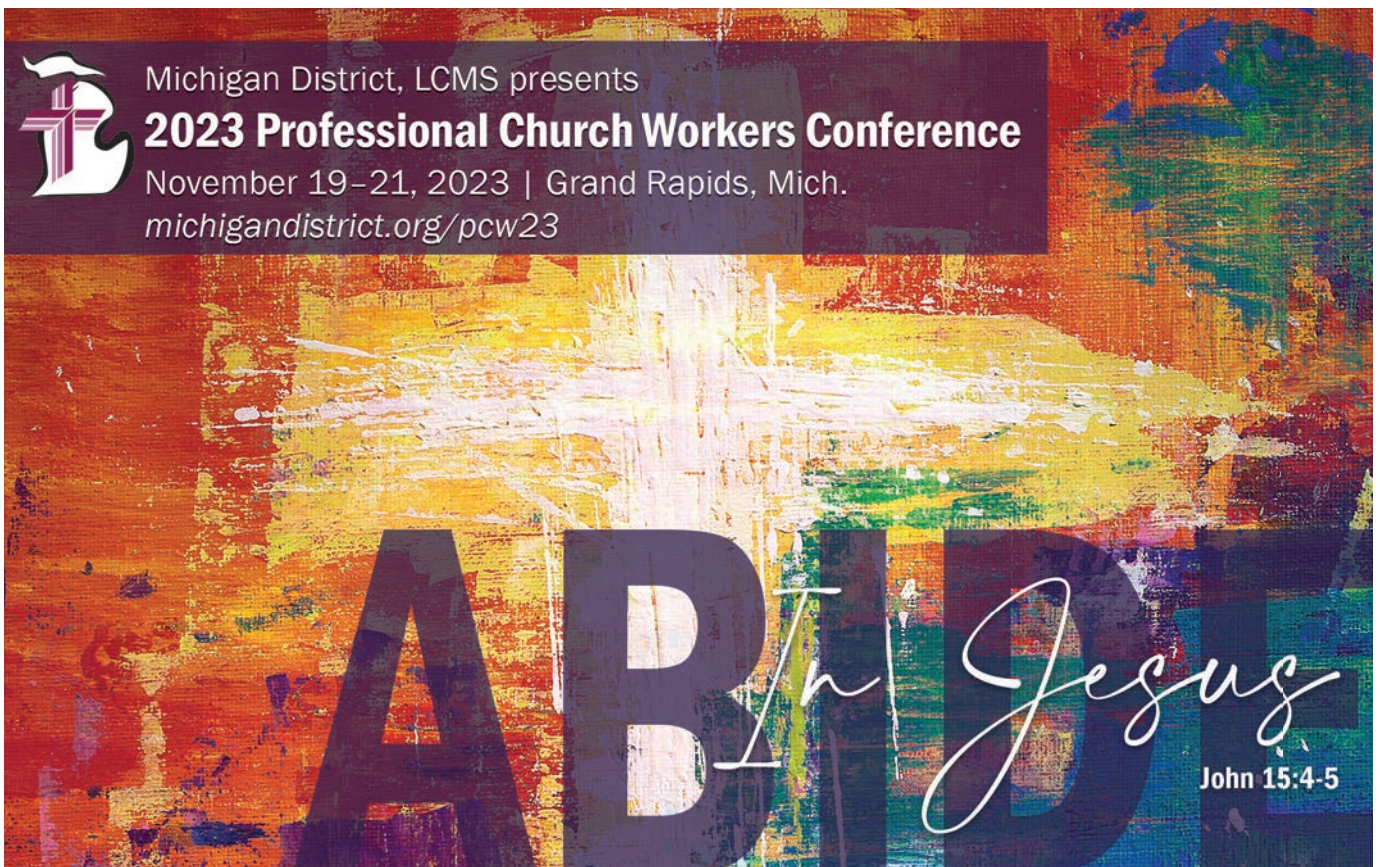
Youth Invited to 2023 Forts and Sorts LCMS Servant Event in Michigan

The building of an actual *Fort* has turned into all *Sorts* of projects done in service to Youth Haven Ranch in Rives Junction, Mich. Youth ages 14–18 are invited to join Messiah, Holt June 18–24, 2023, as they will be involved in construction, painting, and general maintenance of the grounds of the ranch. Participants can share the Gospel and interact with campers, who are underprivileged children aged 6–12. The week also includes Bible studies, personal devotion time, community building activities (such as campfires, bowling, and games), and fun for the servants as they grow in faith and servanthood. For more information, contact the church office at 517.694.1280.



In September, Faith, Prescott welcomed new members.

Photo courtesy of Faith, Prescott



Michigan District, LCMS presents
2023 Professional Church Workers Conference
November 19–21, 2023 | Grand Rapids, Mich.
michigandistrict.org/pcw23

ABID In Jesus
John 15:4-5

2022 Award Recipients

Each year, the Michigan District executives recognize individuals and/or congregations for their ministry efforts. The 2022 recipients were awarded at the 2022 All Pastors Conference in Boyne.

Philip Award



Rev. Ed Doerner and his congregation, Messiah Lutheran Church of Bullock Creek, Midland were recognized for their efforts to bring HOPE to the people of Midland through acts of service and community transformation in the name of Jesus.

Paul Award

Rev. Kyle Kuehl received the Paul Award for his tireless work in the expansion of the Kingdom, bringing HOPE to many people in a wide geographical area. Rev. Kuehl serves congregations in Newberry, Engadine, and Germfask in the Upper Peninsula.



Barnabas Award



St. John, Rochester was distinguished as the congregation that encouraged its sons and daughters to go into full-time church work. For the past two decades, St. John's has sent 20 students into church work careers, four of whom are currently enrolled in the

Concordia Universities and Seminaries.

Gutenberg Award

Trinity, Utica was the recipient of the Gutenberg Award. The congregation started its tech journey almost 15 years ago with a grant from the District and has grown its online presence ever since. They bring God's kingdom to people through social media, livestream of church services and school events, podcasts, and much more, using many creative ways to connect and engage with their audience.



School Shepherd Award

Rev. Joshua Schultz from Immanuel, Alpena received the School Shepherd Award from Travis Grulke. The School Shepherd Award is given to the pastor who exhibits tremendous involvement in the life of the school and in the lives of students and their families.



John Herrmann Award



The Michigan District Stewardship Committee is proud to announce the selection of Lamb of God, Flint and Zion, Auburn for their outstanding stewardship work. The congregations received a plaque, recognition on the

John E. Herrmann Award plaque in the Michigan District office, and a ministry grant of \$1,000 each. Rev. Seth Hemme from Zion is pictured with Rev. Dan Meckes and Rev. Dr. Richard Wolfram.

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty Tour of Washington, D. C.

September 17-20, 2023

Celebrate Freedom on Constitution Day 2023 with Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, Virginia Prodan, and Bob McEwen.

- Lay a Wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
- Take Night Tours of the Monuments
- Visit the Smithsonian Museums plus the Museum of the Bible
- And more!

Reserve Your Spot Today!

Cost: \$1,615/person
Deadline is January 30, 2023 for this price. Payment Plans Available.

lcrifreedom.org

Pastors Celebrating their Anniversary of Ordination at the 2022 All Pastors Conference



(l-r) Marc Schwichtenberg, David & Christie Sidwell, Paul & Joan Monson, Charles & Joyce Koehler, Edward & Diane Meyer, James & Norma Weist. Not pictured: Jim Balzer, Mark Gilson, Gary Nehring, Mark Reinsch, and James Turner

40th Anniversary



(l-r) John Duerr, Peter & Donna Nickel, Timothy & Kathy Azzam, John & Connie Bookshaw, Frederick and Helena Schmitt, James & Lisa Erickson, Paul & Carol Herter, Timothy & Janet Verity, Richard & Judy Wolfram, Daniel & Marjorie McVey, David & Linda Sherry, David & Lori Jung, David and Patricia Maier. Not pictured: Joseph Fremer, Richard Hillenbrand, Eugene Koessel, Roger Mackie, Paul Ruediger, W. Roger Stauffer, Michael Teuscher, and Jonathan Trinklein

50th Anniversary



Photos by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

(l-r) Robert Allmann, Michael & Elizabeth Lutz, Frank & Beverly Graves, Dennis & Lynn Lassanske, Ronald & Lorelle Moritz, Ted & Lynette Turanski, Jack Ferguson. Not pictured: Dale Ahlschwede, Stanley AuBuchon, Timothy Eichberger, John Pohanka, Walter Teske, Dean Wachholz, and Mark Zimmerman

60th Anniversary



Edward & Emily Kast

Gifted
BY GOD'S GRACE.
Prepared
FOR A PURPOSE.

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
WISCONSIN & ANN ARBOR



Michigan District, LCMS presents

2023 Theological Conference

February 4, 2023 | Our Savior, Lansing, Mich.

General \$25
Student \$15

The Word Works

Building an Ethic of Bible Reading

“so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

Keynote Speakers:

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey J. Kloha

Rev. Dr. Mark R. Hoehner

Dr. Thad A. Polk

Rev. David A. Davis - Moderator

Save the Date

Registration to open in December 2023

michigandistrict.org/theological23



Where There's Smoke There's Fire continued from page 5

specific “messianic prophecies” about Jesus, but so also are prominent people, places, and practices in the Old Testament. After all, Jesus said that He did not come to abolish



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the Old Testament but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). St. Paul spells this out for us in his letter to the Colossians when he writes that Old Testament dietary strictures and festive observances were all merely a “*shadow of the things to come, but the substance (which casts the shadow) belongs to Christ*” (Colossians 2:16–17). This is why, for example, Jesus called Himself “*Lord of the Sabbath*” (Matthew 12:8)—because the Sabbath was designed to point to Him and prepare God’s people for His coming. Likewise, it was no mere coincidence that Jesus used the Old Testament Passover celebration as the occasion for instituting the Lord’s Supper for the Sacrament of the Altar. That is clearly congruent with what the Passover was really all about. In Christ we are delivered from our bondage to sin, death, and Satan, for when the innocent blood of Jesus, as a “*lamb without blemish or spot*” (1 Peter 1:19), is applied to us in our Baptism, God passes over our sin (“*for Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed*” for us—1 Corinthians 5:7).

In our Advent worship, we can try switching up the metaphor a bit. Christ is still the Substance that casts His shadow back into the Old Testament. But we can find that shadow in the smoke that is in the Old Testament, “Holy Smoke,” if you will. Then recall the old saying that “where there’s smoke, there’s fire.”

“Jesus is the fire that produces the smoke.”

Jesus is the fire that produces the smoke. But from a distance, the distance of thousands of years of Old Testament history, all that can be seen is the smoke. But it is nonetheless a spiritual smoke signal that there is in fact a fire that is producing it, the fire that is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Consider the smoke that no doubt emanated from the burning bush. In Exodus 3 we read that “*the angel of the LORD appeared*” to Moses “*in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush*” and that “*the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed*” (Exodus 3:2). Now granted, there is no mention in this context of smoke, but it’s a fair assumption that while the bush was not consumed

the fire did in fact produce smoke. The point, really, is that there’s a picture of the coming Christ in this appearance of “the angel of the LORD” to Moses in that burning bush and we don’t want to miss it. Go back with Moses to Mt. Sinai after the exodus, and this time smoke will be a very prominent feature as the holy mountain is now “*wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire*” and “*the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln*” (Exodus 19:18).

Again, our focus is not ultimately on the smoke *per se* but on the fire that produces the smoke, the fire that is Christ Jesus Himself, for “*our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:29). If you have occasion to sit in front of a fireplace this Advent and Christmas season, or maybe even an outdoor fire pit, think about these things. Allow the distant fragrance of smoke move you to reflect upon the thousands of years of Advent anticipation that God’s people endured until the coming of our long-awaited Savior. Allow the warm glow of the lively fire that produces the smoke to fascinate you, and then focus you upon the “*true Light which gives light to everyone*” (John 1:9). Jesus is the Light of the world who has come to reveal God to the nations, and as the glory of His people Israel (Luke 2:32). ■

Rev. Dr. Paul R. Naumann currently serves as Senior Pastor at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Portage, Mich. During his over thirty-five years of ministry, Naumann has been active in positions in the Circuit, District, and Synod, working especially in the areas of Youth Ministry, Outreach, Worship, Campus Ministry, and Small Group Ministry. He has been published in various periodicals and has been a speaker at several seminars and workshops.

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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Andrew Bartholomew (Springfield, MO) to Sr., St. Mark, Kentwood
Rev. Phillip DeVries (Saginaw, MI) to St. John, Cudahy, WI
Rev. Seth Kaiser (Glenwood, IA) to Sole, Trinity Bay City (Monitor)
Rev. Robert Riggs (Carson City, MI) to IIM, Holy Cross, Saginaw
Rev. David Rutter (Shelby Twp., MI) to Associate, Trinity, Utica
Rev. North Sherrill (Grand Rapids, MI) to Associate, Trinity, Denver
Rev. John Weldon (Saginaw, MI) to IIM, St. John, Pinconning

Change of Status and Title Changes

Rev. Douglas Adams (Berrien Springs, MI) to Candidate
Rev. Kurt Eichinger (Bay City, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. Dr. David Maier (Frankfort, MI) to Candidate

Transferred Into District

Rev. John Diener (Emeritus) from English District
Rev. Roger Sassaman (Emeritus) from Indiana District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. North Sherrill (Grand Rapids, MI) to Rocky Mountain District

Reinstated to the Roster

Rev. Kurt Overway to Emeritus

Resigned From the Roster

Rev. Robert Auxter

Called Home

Rev. Frederick Traugott

COMMISSIONED

Change of Status

Brown, David (Trinity, Clinton Township) to Emeritus
Etheridge, Kimberly (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Candidate
Heissenbuettel, Monica (St. Paul, Ann Arbor) to Candidate

Called Home

Himmeler, Marvin
Zill, Steven

School Openings

Marlette, Our Savior Lutheran School

A complete up-to-date listing
of Calls and Vacancies can be
found at michigandistrict.org.



Calendar of Events

Please check the District website for the latest updates and
detailed information as COVID-19 concerns continue.
michigandistrict.org/events

DECEMBER 2022

23–26 DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
24 Christmas Eve
25 Christmas Day

JANUARY 2023

1 New Year's Day
2 DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
6 Epiphany
16–17 Board of Directors
22–28 Lutheran Schools Week

FEBRUARY 2023

2–3 Snow Tire Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
4 Theological Conference
Our Savior, Lansing
22 Ash Wednesday

MARCH 2023

4–5 State Basketball Tournament
CUAA/St. Paul, Ann Arbor

APRIL 2023

6 Maundy Thursday
7 Good Friday
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
9 Easter Sunday
21–23 The Katie
DoubleTree, Bay City

MAY 2023

1 North and East Pastors Conference
DoubleTree, Bay City
9–10 South and East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
10–11 Circuit Visitors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
15–16 West Pastors Conference
Inn at Harbor Shores, St. Joseph
23 Board of Directors
Location TBD
24–25 Intentional Interim Ministry Conference
Michindoh, Hillsdale
29 Memorial Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED