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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 WORKERS

Gratitude

by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

The Thanksgiving holiday is quickly approaching. For our country, it is generally a one-day recognition, an encouragement to be thankful for health, wealth, family, friends, food, and fun. But be thankful to whom? Many will talk about being thankful to “god,” but most don’t know who that is, much less believe in Him.

Not only has a lack of recognition of—and saving relationship with—God contributed to the lack of thanksgiving or directionless gratitude, but for those who do believe in and know the true God, there’s another incredibly danger-

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Gratitude
changes
everything

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ous enemy lurking around: the spirit of entitlement.

In an abrupt way the horror of the terrorist attack on 9/11 revealed that spirit of entitlement: *“How could this happen here? We deserve protection! We demand safety! After all, we live in the United States of America!”*

As a country, we had taken protection, safety, our well-being, the opportunity to work and enjoy life, the blessing of family, friends, health, and the pursuit of happiness **for granted**. Taking things for granted, not being thankful for the daily blessings that God affords to all often leads to a spirit of entitlement. Entitlement is the sly, deceptive, selfish enemy forged by Satan himself, which blinds us to the presence of God. It lives right next door to thanklessness.

I think we’ve all known people whose understanding and quality of life is diminished by a sense of **entitlement**. Their attitude is: *“The government owes me; my parents owe me; the company owes me;”* maybe even, *“God owes me.”* We’ve all known children who, after being deluged with extravagant gifts on Christmas Day, look up from the piles of wrapping paper and say, *“Is there another one? Is this all?”*

A lack of gratitude—and the sense of entitlement that often comes along with it—drains the life out of life. It is a prescription for misery. On the other hand, gratitude is the key to a blessed, content, and divinely connected life ... and **we have every reason to be thankful each hour**. Our God is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

So, let us abandon the attitude of entitlement—that the world owes me an easy ride, that God owes me—and recognize and enjoy the gifts you have already been given. This is

what I know: If God never did anything else for me—if He never answered another prayer or never sent another blessing my way—I could not pay Him back, even in a thousand lifetimes, for all that He has already done for me. And yet still, for all of His children ... God promises more!

Isaiah 12 is one of the shortest chapters in the book of Isaiah, and, I believe, one of the most powerful:

In that day you will say: “I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.” With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that His Name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”

These few verses primarily remind us of three blessings we can remain continually thankful for.

1. God Comforts You With Forgiveness.

I once heard a Christian comedian say something along the lines of, *“I travel around the country trying to convince people that God isn’t mad at them—and it’s a tough sell.”* Having been in the ministry for over 35 years I can also say, *“It IS a tough sell;”* not because of a lack of biblical proof for the doctrine of grace, but because people are often reluctant to receive and believe this incredible Good News. Martin Luther once said of the burgeoning Reformation movement: *“It’s easier to persuade people to hate the pope than it is to convince them that they are saved by God’s grace.”*

I haven’t met too many people who can sin with reckless abandon without their conscience “kicking in.” However, I’ve met a lot of people who are convinced that God is so angry with them that they could never experience a close relationship with Him. Since we are often reluctant to forgive ourselves, we assume that God is equally reluctant to forgive us. **But that is not the case!**

More than anything else, God wants for you to experience the comfort of His love and forgiveness. He doesn’t want you to live a life of isolation, loneliness, and ignorance of His compassion, seeking fulfillment in drugs, sex, alcohol, money, and all the other empty pleasures the world has to offer. He wants to bury your past, take away all of your sins, and give you a new life. Isaiah said, *“I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me”* (v. 1).

To be sure, sin has to be acknowledged and confessed. There is a definite need for repentance, holiness, and obedience. We can’t pretend that sin doesn’t exist. The Apostle John writes, *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves ...”* (1 John 1:8).

Tim Keller, in one of my favorite quotes of his, puts it like this: *“The power of the gospel comes in two movements. It first says, “I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dared believe,” but then quickly follows with, “I am more accepted and loved than I ever dared hope.”* [Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Kindle Locations

1098-1105). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.]

So, let's not give sin more power than it deserves. Sin is powerful—no question about it—and it can bring a lot of misery into our lives. **But God's grace is more powerful!** He can ...

- free us from the guilt of sin;
- heal us from the brokenness of sin;
- erase the stain of sin;
- replace the pain of sin with the comfort of his mercy;
- destroy the grasp of sin; and
- free us from the power of sin in our life.

Best of all ... He wants to!

We've all done things we regret. And yet, God has made us an incredible offer: *"Turn to me, and I will remove the pain of those regrets, and comfort you with mercy and forgiveness."* How awesome! How thankful we should be!

Because of God's grace, we can begin every day with a renewed sense of gratitude: *"God, thank you for ...*

- *forgiving my sins;*
- *comforting my troubled soul;*
- *not being ashamed of me; and*
- *making me your own."*

2. God Gives You Strength in Your Weakest Moments.

Isaiah exults, *"Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song"* (v. 2).

Many of us have experienced emotional ups and downs ... and I'll bet recently. There have been times, in my weakest moments, when I've been concerned, maybe even afraid of the future. You have "what if" questions also, right? What if family members move and don't get together anymore? What if one of us is in a debilitating car accident?

In those moments, the still small voice of God speaks: *"Trust Me, and don't be afraid. I will give you strength. I will take care of you. I will take care of the family. All things will work for good."*

When we talk about salvation, most of the time a good percentage of our minds jump to thoughts of eternity in heaven. I'm thankful that we have heaven to look forward to! But salvation isn't just about our future eternity; salvation is about NOW—our lives today. God doesn't just want to forgive us of our sins, He wants to save us from our sins, and give us a purpose, strength, and courage to live each day.

You will not find a verse in the Bible that encourages you to quit. Neither will you find a verse that encourages you to live in fear of this world. There's no verse that says, "Fear death. Fear terror. Fear disaster. Fear sick-

**"Because of God's *grace*,
we can begin *every day*
with a renewed sense of
gratitude ..."**

ness." But there are many verses that encourage us in the face of fear, to put our trust in God.

"The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you" (Jeremiah 1:8).

"Peace I leave with you ... do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

In the gospel of Mark there is the account of a man who came to Jesus asking Him to heal his dying daughter. While Jesus was on His way to the man's house, messengers came and said, *"It's too late. She's dead."* Jesus turned to the man and said, *"Don't be afraid. Just believe"* (Mark 5:36b).

In that man's weakest moment, when his worst fears seemed to become reality, Jesus told him, *"Don't fear. Just believe."* It wasn't long before that man, Jairus, saw the power of God demonstrated in a miraculous way.

God is our salvation; we don't have to give in to fear. He has promised to give his people the strength to face whatever comes our way. We can count on Him, even in our weakest moments.

3. God Promises to Never Be Far Away.

Isaiah said, *"Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you"* (Isaiah 12:6).

Notice those last two words. *"Among you."* He is here. He is with us now. We don't pray to a distant God who is billions of light years away in a remote universe; we pray to a God who is right here with us, right now, all day, every day. **God chooses to be close to us!** He gave us Immanuel—God with us!—Jesus! And Jesus promised, *"And surely I Am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20b).

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A Light in the Darkness

by Samuel Schick

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).

Over the past 6 months I have had the privilege of being a part of the Luke Project 52 Clinic’s ministry in Detroit every first and third Thursday of the month as a student intern.

If I had to summarize what happens at the clinic in a sentence, it would be this: The light of Christ shines into the darkness to save babies, change lives, and help churches.

Just a few weeks ago, the Director used the clinic’s new ambulance to take a pregnant woman to the emergency room because she had an incredibly high blood pressure. If the Luke Project 52 Clinic did not exist, chances that she would have sought medical care are slim, and her delivery may not have been as successful as it was.

In the city of Detroit, the infant mortality rate in 2015



Photos by Elisea Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

was 13.1 per 1,000 live births. In the rest of the United States, it was 5.9 per 1,000 live births. One of the strongest reasons for this higher rate of infant mortality in Detroit is that women in poverty do not receive the prenatal care that they need. The Luke Project 52 Clinic is an organization that sets out to wage war on infant mortality, and it is working. The clinic is designed around the fact that these women do not receive the care that they need because they don't want to go. The fact is that the bureaucracy of hospitals creates a hostile environment (especially toward people in poverty).

The Luke Project 52 Clinic does medical care differently. Volunteers provide quality medical care while loving patients with the love of Christ. The clinic staff approaches their patients with an unconditional love so that they will want to come back and get the care that they need to give birth to healthy babies and help those babies stay healthy through infancy.

Along with saving babies, the light of Christ is truly changing lives through the Luke Project 52 Clinic. When I started my intern-

ship, one of my first tasks was to pick up a young woman and her almost 1-year-old baby. She was one of the first patients of the clinic when she was 15 years old. In the car, it was always fun to watch her mood change as we got further from wherever she was staying and closer to the clinic. In her eyes, we were truly approaching a city on a hill, a light in the darkness. A few months ago I watched that light take a hold of her life as I had the privilege to attend her and her baby girl's baptism. She is no longer a patient at the Luke Project 52 Clinic, but now she volunteers there as she works on getting her GED to fight the cycle of poverty.

Finally, the light of Christ is helping churches through the Luke Project 52 Clinic.

Family of God ministries has been an incredible help to the Luke Project 52 Clinic by giving it almost everything it needs, but the greatest assistance that they give is their own ministry. Every Thursday night there is a dinner and a women's Bible study. I can no longer count the amount of people that I talk to at the clinic that are absolutely shocked that Family of God ministries serves a

hot meal every week night. Simply by being located at Family of God ministries, the clinic has the opportunity to connect its women and their babies with a church family that can support them daily as they give birth and rear their children.

During my time at the Luke Project 52 Clinic I saw that, when the church met a need in its community with the light and love of Christ, amazing things happened: Mountains were moved, lives were changed, and the church existed in the world as the city on a hill that Christ intended. My experience at the Luke Project 52 Clinic has truly changed my life and my view of ministry forever.

This is not only how ministry ought to be done in urban settings, but this is how ministry ought to be done everywhere: with the church as a city on a hill, looking to meet the needs of its community with the love of Christ. ■

Samuel Schick is a first-year student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He graduated from Concordia University Ann Arbor in December of 2017.



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Does Sickness Justify Assisted Suicide?

By Reis Davis

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10 NIV).

With assisted suicide becoming legal in more countries, people with disabilities or diseases are faced with the choice of whether or not to die with dignity. Dying with dignity is when someone who is faced with a terminal illness decides to control their death. Although someone might have a terminal disease, they should not resort to assisted suicide. When people are under stress they don't make good decisions; it doesn't allow them to see what their future holds, and it doesn't give God a chance to work in their life.

When people are very stressed, they don't make the best decisions for themselves. Although someone might be able to get another person to help them make a decision, that person often seeks advice from others and can be swayed by emotions. Dealing with sickness and disease is a heavy burden to bear. As humans, we are naturally inclined to take the easy way out. Choosing to end a life instead of nurturing it could seem to be an easy alternative. When people under stress are making a difficult decision, they may pay more attention to the upsides of the alternatives and less to the downsides (Mather, 2012).

If someone chooses assisted suicide, they won't ever

know what their future could hold. Jeanette Hall was suffering from cancer and was going to use assisted suicide but her doctor wouldn't prescribe the pills. The doctor, in his final effort, said to her, “Wouldn't you like to see your son graduate? Wouldn't you like to see him get married?” That kept Hall from choosing assisted suicide. “Fifteen years later, Hall is now cured of cancer and celebrating her 70th birthday with her son” (Harkness, 2015). Our future is made from a plan by God. People who choose assisted suicide forfeit their chance to see God's plan and essentially are saying that God's plan is not enough. Although death is something we all will face, it is in God's plan for when that will occur.

If you choose assisted suicide, God's work can't be done. A couple of years ago, my dad was diagnosed with frontotemporal lobe dementia and we never looked at assisted suicide as an option. There has been a lot of pain and hard times, but we have met many people whom God has put into our lives who are loving and caring towards us. We would never have known them otherwise. God can work in anyone's life and you just have to believe that He can do anything. My life has not been easy since my dad's diagnosis, but there has never

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What is a Steward? By Richard Wolfram

Whenever an article is written about stewardship, there is often an assumption that people know what a steward is. My experience would say that is not a good assumption to make.

As children in the kingdom of our heavenly Father, we are stewards by creation and Baptism. What does this mean? Who is this heavenly Father whose children we are? What are we stewards of? How do we know?

A Steward is Not the Owner

We can only know this from God's Word! We receive it by faith and believe it.

Psalm 24:1—*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."*

1 Cor. 6:19–20—*"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."*

Ezekiel 18:4—*"... For every living soul belongs to me."*

A Steward is Given Authority and Responsibility by the Owner

Titus 2:11–14 reads, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."*

Scott Rodin, in his book *Stewards of the Kingdom*, shares that as stewards we are in four relationships:

1. With God;
2. With our self—our purpose is to have certainty about who we are, why we are here, and what we are to be doing in Christ;
3. With our neighbor—whom we are to love as we love ourselves;
4. With creation—from the beginning, *"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it, rule over...'"* (Gen 1:28ff.). And *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"* (Gen 2:15).

A Steward Cares for the Possessions of the Owner

The truth of the Gospel is that we have a Savior in Jesus

Christ. He is the one who stepped forward and gave up His life in our place to restore our relationship with our heavenly Father. That is justification and it is all God's work. We do not do works to be saved but because we are saved. Salvation is ours in Christ.

We are Christians by God's grace through our faith in Jesus worked in us by the Holy Spirit. God does it all! The following is my favorite description of a Christian, attributed to Luther. He said, *"A Christian is a child of the Holy Spirit, an heir of eternal life, a companion to the holy angels, a ruler of the world and a partaker of God's divine nature. He is a wonder of the world, a terror of Satan, an ornament of the church, a desirable object of heaven with a heart full of supplications and with hands full of good works."*

As Christians we are disciples who follow Christ and learn from him. Robert Kolb said, *"What we do as Christians is always secondary to, and a result of, who we are as children of God. Our actions flow from our attitude, an attitude of trust in Jesus Christ."*

Our actions are those of a steward; a child of God who realizes his/her role in life is that of a partner, trustee, manager, caretaker, temporary custodian of gifts that belong to God. We receive from God gratefully, manage carefully and responsibly, share generously, and return to God joyfully and with increase. What stewards do is in the realm of sanctification where we cooperate with the Holy Spirit within us to do the good works God gives us to do.

"My child, go and work today in my vineyard."

A Steward is Accountable to the Owner

God's Word is full of examples that tell us that we will be held accountable regarding God's kingdom work.

Hebrews 4:13—*"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account."*

Accountability is foreign to some these days. A generation or two ago there was a saying, **"There's no such thing as a free lunch."** Which means that at some point you'll be accountable for what you did or didn't do. Individual accountability is part and parcel of those who repent and believe. It's doing the Father's will (good works) and that doing is brought about by the Holy Spirit working in our lives through Word and Sacrament and enabling and empowering our response. Being accountable to our Heavenly Father is not to bring about our salvation because we are already saved!

Some in the church today, just as in Jesus' day, believe that they are members of God's covenant because, unlike others, they have promised to follow Jesus and His example. There may be the thought that a choice of God and a godly lifestyle

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CEF Housing Loan Program Helps Those Answering the Call



“CEF’s Housing Loan Program helps open up the possibility of living where you work. It’s a huge thing knowing the interest I am paying is re-invested in Kingdom work.”

– Pastor Harrison Parker
Living Water Lutheran Church,
Whitmore Lake

When congregations look at the long-term stability of their church, most will focus on facilities and infrastructure. This is natural, since bricks and mortar are the most tangible elements and are the quickest to show signs of need. But, while these are important concerns that require planning and focus, they are not the only challenges to long-term health.

When we look deeper, we can see that pastoral leaders and support staff play a huge role in the growth and success of our churches. That is why Church Extension Fund developed a program to help clergy and church workers secure housing.

Known as the Housing Loan Program (HLP), this unit of CEF’s activities is overseen by Assistant Vice President-Loan Manager Jodi Gonzalez. The program has long been a part of the CEF portfolio, and was revamped to better serve the needs of Michigan district congregations in the mid-1990s.

The HLP offers down payment assistance and mortgage origination for qualified congregations and their church workers.

“It works as a two-step process,” Gonzalez explains. “We lend the needed money to the congregation, which in turn lends the money to the pastor or church worker as a mortgage loan.”

Because CEF is the lender, they facilitate the entire process. This means that there is no need for internal closing costs or many of the other fees associated with traditional mortgage lending, and the interest rate of the loan is generally lower than what is offered by commercial banks or mortgage companies. Not only does this save money and increase the buying power of the applicant, but it also streamlines the process.

“It was really easy,” says Pastor Enwood Nevis of St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Otisville. “CEF provided the forms to the congregation — and I was amazed at how few documents we actually had to sign. We were done with the closing in about 20 minutes.”

That sentiment was echoed by Pastor Harrison Parker of Living Water Lutheran Church in Whitmore Lake.

“The church’s founding pastor, Dan Flynn, suggested we contact CEF, and when we did, we worked with Shannon Morrin. He walked us through the process, and was always responsive if we had questions or needed information. The forms we had to fill out were so much less intimidating than when we had worked with the commercial lenders... My wife and I had never done this before, so it was nice to know that we could get answers.”

As with traditional lenders, those taking advantage of the CEF Housing Loan Program can get a “pre-approval” for the amount they qualify for, allowing the house-hunting process to be done with confidence. Unique to CEF, a portion of the qualified amount can be used as down payment assistance, allowing up to 100% financing.



What’s more, because of the relationship of CEF to the congregation, the mortgage payment can be automatically deducted from the home-buyer’s salary.

All of this not only works to give peace of mind, but is also an added benefit for churches in the Michigan District.

“Knowing CEF was here made me more comfortable coming back,” Pastor Nevis noted.

“The CEF Housing Loan Program helps open up the possibility of living where you work,” added Pastor Parker, who explained that housing costs in the area of Living Water Lutheran Church made the low-interest rate of the CEF Program very important in determining whether he and his wife Stacey could afford to buy.

Both ministers also pointed out that working with CEF paid another very real dividend, a thought summed up nicely by Pastor Parker:

“It’s a huge thing knowing the interest I am paying is re-invested in Kingdom work.”



Church Extension Fund

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Why I Support the Here We Stand Campaign

By Alicia Winget

From ages past, God’s people have faced the danger of absorption into the surrounding culture. From calling Abraham out to leave his homeland and walk in covenant with Him to a new land, to calling His Church into a New Covenant relationship with Him in and through Jesus, God tells us to be separate from the sinful culture (not the people) of the world. So, Here We Stand, a “*chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,*” 1 Peter 2:9a).

Now what? Now our Lord says we are to go into the world! What? Yes, now that God has redeemed us by the blood of Christ, set us apart and filled us with His own Spirit, He calls us to go into the world. The remainder of 1 Peter 2:9 says, “*that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*”

The world is vastly different from what it was only a few decades ago. Many view the Church today as old-fashioned, unnecessary, and irrelevant. Shame on us when we remain inside the “ivory towers” of our church buildings, waiting for these people to “come to church.” We, the Church, must follow the example of Jesus, as He went out into the world ministering to the outcast, hurting, desperate

and hopeless individuals. He touched the lepers, ate and fellowshiped with sinners, drew the children to Himself, all the while teaching in love, with no condemnation.

The *Here We Stand* Campaign gives each of us the opportunity to participate in this type of ministry as funding is provided for Innovative Missional Ministry.

The Campaign also provides funds for Professional Church Worker Scholarships. While we must go out from the gathering of our congregations, we must never minimize the importance of gathering together where we are strengthened by Word and Sacrament, where we practice love for one another, where we receive our preparation to go into the world.

I am appreciative of the leadership within our district guiding us to be salt and light. Therefore, I give.

An avid student of the Bible and history, Alicia Winget has published devotional materials in Portals of Prayer and in The Secret Place. She has also published the books Out of the Rubble, From World War II Chaos to American Entrepreneurship, and What If ... (a devotional poem). Alicia is a member of Grace Lutheran Fellowship, Romeo and has served on boards of many organizations.

A “By the Numbers” look at the Here We Stand Campaign

(through October 5, 2018)

\$5,662,855.43	Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$4,716,959.97	Cash received which includes \$400,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$728,016.06	Outstanding commitments (pledges)
1,291	Total Contributors
1,154	Individual Contributors
137	Congregations Contributing
37.2%	% of Michigan District Congregations currently participating
8,144	Participants in the “Crafted By Truth” Bible Reading Program
1,001	Participants who have completed the Bible Reading Program
13,300	Attendees at the 500th Anniversary Worship Service at the Breslin Center
\$1,142,572.28	Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$2,159,433.30	Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$ 850,395.78	Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$1,292,574.59	Total given/pledged for International Ministries



Here We Stand

Bible verse: Psalm 71:17–18

“O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”

herewestand.michigandistrict.org

Valley Lutheran Breaks Ground

In September, Valley Lutheran High School broke ground for its \$6.5 million, 30,000-square-foot campus expansion.

“Our school has always challenged students to fully use their God-given abilities to serve others,” Valley Lutheran Executive Director Dr. John Brandt said. *“The addition not only reflects the growing interest and need for excellent STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, but also the importance of arts and athletics in the lives of students.”* He continues, *“This project is also a testimony to the faithfulness of God’s people to this ministry. They are excited to help position Valley Lutheran to continue to be a place where educational excellence and Christian faithfulness are taught and modeled.”*

Fundraising began in late 2015 for the \$10 million campaign, which includes a \$6.5 million addition that will modernize the school’s STEM capabilities by adding four new science labs, in addition to new music and art rooms, a new special needs room, a new weight room, new and



remodeled locker rooms, common areas, and a new main entrance with security improvements.

Over 450 people were in attendance, including keynote speaker Rev. Greg Schlicker (a member of the first graduating class of Valley Lutheran in 1980), Saginaw Mayor Dennis Browning, Saginaw Township Supervisor Tim Braun, lead architect Doug Kuefner of WTA Architects, Matt Bronner of Wm. Bronner & Son Contractors, board members, faculty, staff, students, and more.

Valley broke ground on its original facility in 1978 and celebrated 40 years of service in 2017.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Holy Cross, Saginaw started its “Prayer Shawl Ministry” in 2011. To date, 193 prayer shawls have been given out. The shawls are given to new members, baptizands, confirmands, homebound members, people who’ve had a death in the family, and those hospitalized or in need of comfort. Pastor James Krueger blesses the shawls before they are given out. Each one has a tag on it with the name of the person who made it, and a pamphlet about the Prayer Shawl Ministry at Holy Cross.



Everyone is eligible to receive a shawl, regardless if they belong to Holy Cross or somewhere else. The mission of the ministry is to serve those in need of comfort and Christian support through prayer and Christian love.

The prayer shawl committee meets twice a month and is actively recruiting younger members of their church to learn this craft, and to also learn the joy of ministering to the needs of others.

Recently, the committee members wanted to show others how many people have been blessed. A tree was created and a leaf was placed on the tree for each recipient’s name and year the prayer shawl was given to them. The tree is a beautiful way to show the love given to all the people who have received the shawls and a way to show the JOY in serving the Lord with God-given talents.

A Manor Christmas

A Manor Christmas is back for a second year, taking place November 30–December 2. Decorators will again be bringing each room to life with gorgeous Christmas



decor. Docents will be available to share interesting history about each room. The Christkindlmarkt will feature vendors under a heated tent ready to help you finish up your Christmas shopping with a unique twist. And entertainers and food vendors will again delight your senses! A professional photographer will also be available to take your family’s Christmas portraits. So gather together your women’s group, families, seniors, and invite your neighbors to come experience the beautiful historic Earhart Manor on Concordia University’s campus in Ann Arbor.

Be ready to decorate for Christmas by joining us for the pre-event on November 17–18 in Concordia’s Greenhouse and order your quality, pre-lit tree which will be ready for pick up at the Manor Christmas event, or come shop Bronner’s Christmas ornaments and nativity sets.

Find out more at www.cuaa.edu/landingpages/manorchristmas/index.html or join A Manor Christmas event on Facebook at [cuannarbor](https://www.facebook.com/cuannarbor).

Church Interpreter Students Return to Coldwater to Interpret and Renew Friendships

In June, twelve students were welcomed onto Concordia Theological Seminary's campus in Fort Wayne, Ind., with the Kramer Chapel bell



tower reflected in the quaint campus pond. The story might end there for some, but this group of individuals was not in Indiana just for Midwestern sightseeing. They were gathered for a unique purpose. The Church Interpreter Training Institute (CITI), which was started by the Rev. Dr. George Kraus in 1985, was ready for its 2018 summer program. This four-day intensive training program, a ministry of Lutheran Friends of the Deaf, serves to train students to better serve deaf people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to equip them for continued growth in faith and leadership in the Christian Church.

This year, CITI was divided into essential classes related to church interpreting in American Sign Language, including classes such as learning how to sign religious vocabulary, interpreting Scripture, studying ASL linguistics, signing hymns, understanding deaf culture, learning the art of facial/body expressions in deaf communication, exploring the scientific approach to deafness, listening to a presentation on the history and current status of deaf ministry and missions, and enjoying a Bible Study on the hermeneutical Christology of the poetry in the Psalms.

Attendees then put their hours of training into action by interpreting for a worship service at St. Paul, Coldwater where some deaf members regularly attend. Rev. Aaron Chittick serves there as head pastor. When asked why he believes that deaf people gravitate to St. Paul's, Rev. Chittick quickly responded, "It's simple. We offer the Gospel in a language that they can understand. God shows deaf people that he has provided a deaf service for them, so they come because God takes care of deaf people too." Chittick continued, "[By] bringing in the CITI attendees to interpret for us, St. Paul's is able to see that there is [not just a need in our church], but a need everywhere for church interpreters. It makes me proud to see that the Church is raising up new workers to bring the Gospel to deaf people."

To find out more about the Church Interpreter Training Institute's regional workshops or other programs offered by Lutheran Friends of the Deaf, you can visit: lutheran-friendsofthedeaf.org.

St. John Celebrates 20 Years of Praise and Picnic in the Park

Rochester's Municipal Park was the site of St. John, Rochester's church in the community in August as more than 1,100 St. John members and their guests celebrated the 20th Anniversary of "Family Praise and Picnic in the Park." Outdoor worship was blessed with good weather, inspiring music, and Pastor Marc Schwichtenberg's encouraging message of hope for the community.

Following the worship celebration, attendees had an opportunity to visit the Health/Wellness Fair and Photo Booth and view the Vintage Vehicle Display and a unique motorcycle and metal sculpture display. A picnic lunch was followed by ice cream and other treats. The decorated "Wheels" Parade with 37 entries was led by the Rochester Police Department. A Fire Truck/Police Vehicle Display, K-9 Team Demonstration, and Face Painting were popular activities along with entertainment by clowns and an illusionist.

Over \$2,000 was also raised at the event in support of the Rochester Neighborhood House that ministers to the less fortunate in the greater Rochester area.



New Members at Faith, Prescott

In August, Faith, Prescott welcomed nine new members. They are pictured (l-r) Everett Lake, Brett Kile, Tony Lyons, Bianca Hintz, Rick Hoffmann, Becki Gideon, Andrea Hoffmann, Susan Kiwak, Pastor Jansen, Sharlene Allerdycce. Not pictured are Michelle Duke and Christopher Shimmons.



LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE



Meet LLL Treasurer, Phil Krauss II

Krauss has served Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) faithfully, wearing many hats over the years, and continues to do so for the Michigan District of the International Lutheran Laymen's League.

Krauss served on the LHM Board of Directors for several years including as board chairman and vice chairman. He has served in other capacities such as Lutheran Laymen's League Board of Governors member, district president, and secretary. Currently, he serves as treasurer for the Michigan LLL District.

Krauss brings 30 years of experience in higher education administration to Detroit Mercy Law with over four years of direct experience in financial aid. He worked in local banking, private colleges, large state-supported universities, and a community

college—all before his work at Detroit Mercy Law. Presently, he assists with the day-to-day operations in the financial aid office at University Of Detroit Mercy School Of Law. Krauss works with new and prospective law students, helping them secure funding for

their legal education and advises returning students on financial aid and financial literacy issues. The Law School Student Employment program and scholarship database maintenance are part of his duties.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

Expanding the Connecting Kids to Christ (CKC) Tutoring Program

Expanding the Connecting Kids to Christ Tutoring Program - \$25,000 – Gifts for All God's Children and East Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Detroit, reaching out to inner-city communities through its tutoring program in reading, vocabulary, and math for at-risk kids. This grant will expand the population served with evangelism activities and include corporate and group prayer, Bible study, and classes for baptism and confirmation for adults and children.

GRANT RECIPIENT



SEE
WHAT
OUR
MIGHTY
MITES
CAN DO!



Gratitude continued from page 3

In the book of Hebrews He said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). And, in case you’re wondering, the Greek word(s) for “never” (ὐδὲ μὴ) means “*never!*”



When the sun rises and you wake up in the morning and say a prayer, your prayer doesn’t travel across the universe in order for Him to hear it. He is right there with you. When you sin and cry out to Him for forgiveness, he is already there with you.

God is literally as near to you as your next breath. He is among us. He is near to bless us even though we don’t deserve it. **He is a loving God of infinite supply.**

Conclusion

God is not mad at you; he wants to forgive you and comfort you. He doesn’t expect you to fight your own battles; He wants to strengthen you and save you. He hasn’t abandoned you; He promises to be with you always. What, then, should our response be?

Gratitude. Exuberant gratitude. When it comes to expressing thankfulness to God, foot-stomping, cheering, shouting, hand-clapping—they’re all acceptable to Him. Isaiah said in verse 4, “Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy.”

As a youth pastor with a group of about 47 youth and adults in Estes Park, Colorado, I can remember the kids being so thankful after a Bible study that really connected with them, where the personal work of Jesus had never been more “real.” After a prayer, one of the kids led everyone in spelling out and shouting the name of Jesus. I can remember thinking, “I hope the entire U.S. of A. can hear us. I want them to know how thankful we are for all that Jesus has done for us.”

We’re a little more sophisticated in our approach these days; we don’t shout as much as we used to. **Maybe we should.** We need to proclaim to Him—and to the world around us—our gratitude for all that He has done.

Gratitude is the key to a blessed, content, connected life. I believe it is the key to a dynamic relationship with God. Our relationship with Him does **not** begin with what we do for Him. It recognizes what God has done for us and continues by receiving in faith what He promises to still do. Isaiah reminds us: “With joy you will continue to draw water from the wells of salvation” (v.3). And then,

the words of Jesus in John 4 come to mind: “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14).

What reason do we have to not be joyful? To not be supremely thankful? **In Him, we have forgiveness, comfort, salvation, strength, and His promise to be with us always.**

Mark Tidd of Webster, New York, describes an experience from his college days:

An old man showed up at the back door of the house we were renting. Opening the door a few inches, we saw his eyes were glassy and his furrowed face glistened with silver stubble. He clutched a wicker basket holding a few unappealing vegetables. He bid us good morning and offered his produce for sale. We were uneasy enough that we made a quick purchase to alleviate both our pity and our fear.

To our chagrin, he returned the next week, introducing himself as Mr. Roth, the man who lived in the shack down the road. As our fears subsided, we got close enough to realize it wasn’t alcohol but cataracts that marbled his eyes. On subsequent visits, he would shuffle in, wearing two mismatched right shoes, and pull out a harmonica. With glazed eyes set on a future glory, he’d puff out old gospel tunes between conversations about vegetables and religion.

On one visit he exclaimed, “The Lord is so good! I came out of my shack this morning and found a bag full of shoes and clothing on my porch.”

“That’s wonderful, Mr. Roth!” we said. “We’re happy for you.”

“You know what’s even more wonderful?” he asked. “Just yesterday I met some people that could really use them.”

- **Gratitude helps you see the gracious supply of God.**
- **Gratitude allows you to give.**
- **Gratitude helps you to truly live!**

This Thanksgiving, as we reflect on all that we have to be thankful for, let’s remember to be thankful, first and foremost, for all that He has done for us, remembering His gracious promise, “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

In Jesus’ Name, Amen. ■



Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier
President, Michigan District, LCMS.

Does Sickness Justify Assisted Suicide *continued from page 6*

been a time that I thought assisted suicide would be a solution.

People should not resort to assisted suicide because, when someone is stressed, they don't make the best decisions. Assisted suicide doesn't allow the person to see what might happen during the rest of one's life and it doesn't give God a chance to work within your life. God will strengthen us and will be with us. It is our job to trust in His plan and live our lives praising Him. Assisted suicide is not the answer because God has a plan for everyone. ■

This essay was written by Reis Davis, an 8th grader at St. John, Rochester, an elementary school student who won first place in the 2018 Lutherans for Life of Michigan Life Issues Contest. All 7th and 8th grade students are encouraged to participate in the 2019 contest. Projects should be created under the guidance of the pastor or teacher, and submitted by March 15, 2019. For more information, visit lflmi.org.

Bibliography:

Harkness, Kelsey. "Assisted Suicide: How One Woman Chose to Die, Then Survived." *The Daily Signal*. 18 Mar 2015. Web. 12 Mar 2018.

Mather, Mara. "Stress Changes How People Make Decisions." *Psychological Science*. 27 Feb 2012. Web. 11 Mar 2018.

Rasmussen, Norm. "Do I Really Want to Commit Suicide?" *Precious Testimonies*. Web. 11 Mar 2018.



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What's A Steward? *continued from page 7*

have brought one into His good graces. That doesn't leave much room for repentance and faith in what God has done, does it? After all, it is by faith in Jesus that we are saved and serve.

There are many who are quick to give lip service to faith but fail in life service motivated by Jesus' love; those who profess to have faith and yet in practice despise preaching and the Word by not worshipping and participating in the communion of the church.

God offers grace, mercy, and forgiveness, inviting us to repent and believe. He offered His Son Jesus who was nailed to the cross along with our sins, resulting in our redemption. He saved us. It is done! Everyday God our Father calls us into His service, no matter how we've responded in the past. He says to each of us, "My child, go and work today in my vineyard." That work is what a steward does. We are stewards because of God's love.

Enabled by God's grace and empowered by His Spirit through His Word, may we all live as His good stewards. May we go make disciples so that God's kingdom bears abundant fruit and many souls are saved. ■

Rev. Dr. Richard J. Wolfram is the Assistant to the President - Stewardship Ministries.



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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Bassett, Carl W. (Niles) to IIP, St. Paul, South Bend, IN
Berg, Peter M. (Chicago) to Good Shepherd, Middleville
Eggert, James F. (St. Joseph) to IIP, First, Charlotte
Hess, Joel A. (Cadillac) to St. James, Chicago, IL
Hoffman, Charles R. (Missionary, Seoul, Korea) to Christ, Boyne City
Johnson, Scott E. (Hillsdale) to Zion, Mondovi, WI
Miller, Randy J. (Waterford) to Associate Pastor, Gloria Dei, Houston, TX
Moran, David R. (Marshall) to SMP, Christ, Marshall
Rubino, Chris J. (Byron Center) to SMP, St. Mark, Kentwood

Change of Status

Nickel, Peter S. (Huntington Woods) to Emeritus

Transferred into District

Mackowiak, John E. (Central Illinois District) as Emeritus
Reinsch, Mark C. (North Wisconsin District) as Emeritus

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Gruber, Mary (Crown of Life, Rochester Hills) to St. John, Fraser
Kruger, Anna (Zion, Bay City) to St. John's, Midland
Jung, Scott (Holy Cross, Indianapolis, IN) to Zion, Holland
Schnuell-Ruth, Karen (Candidate) to Community, Readlyn, IA
Schultz, Mark (Trinity, Wausau, WI) to Emmanuel, Dearborn

Change of Status

Case, Susan (Trinity, Saint Joseph) to Emeritus
Choroba, Katherine (Candidate) to Emeritus
Grays, Jean (Candidate) to Emeritus
Kratz, Dean (Lutheran High School Association, Rochester Hills) to Emeritus
McQueen, Carla (St. Peter, Hemlock) to Emeritus
Mueller, Walter (Candidate) to Emeritus
Saleska, Candice (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Candidate
Scheeres, Maribeth (St. Paul's, Farmington / Concordia, Redford) to Candidate
Sturm, Raymond (St. Paul, Lapeer) to Emeritus

Transferred out of District

Schnuell-Ruth, Karen (Candidate) to Iowa District East
Williams, Judy (Emeritus) to Southeastern District

Transferred into District

Jung, Scott (Indiana District) to Zion, Holland
Schultz, Mark (North Wisconsin District) to Emmanuel, Dearborn
Tschudy, Joy (Southern Illinois District) as Candidate

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

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

2 New Church Workers' Conference
CUAA North Building, Ann Arbor
22–23 Thanksgiving Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

DECEMBER

24–25 Christmas Eve/Christmas Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
31 New Year's Eve
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

JANUARY

21–22 Michigan District Board of Directors
Marriott Auburn Hills, Pontiac

FEBRUARY

2 Theological Conference – Prayer
Our Savior, Lansing
9 FFPN District Workshop Event 9
Location TBD
14–15 Principals' Snowtire Conference
Crown Plaza Lansing West, Lansing

MARCH

6 Ash Wednesday
19 Michigan District Board of Directors
CUAA North Building, Ann Arbor

For more detailed information, visit michigandistrict.org/events.



Be
Constant
in
PRAYER
Romans 12:12

Speakers
Rev. Dr. Victor J. Belton
Connie Denninger
Rev. Christopher K. Paavola
Rev. C. Bryan Wolfmueller

Michigan District, LCMS presents
2019 Theological Conference
February 2, 2019 | Our Savior, Lansing, Mich.
michigandistrict.org/theological19
A conference for laity and church workers together on prayer.