

DECEMBER 2018

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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

There's a Place for Quiet

by Monica VanDerWeide

“Why are you so quiet?”

I got that question a lot as a kid. Even as an adult, I am occasionally called out for being the quiet one in the group. It has always bothered me when people say such things, as if being an introvert is some sort of psychological disorder. In a world that is busy and loud and full of incessant chatter, quiet types like myself are often stereotyped as boring or conceited and brushed aside in favor of someone louder and flashier.

But there's a place for quiet. God used a quiet person to accomplish

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Be Still

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something that changed the world. I picture Mary as a quiet, God-fearing young woman who went about her days without fanfare. Imagine her surprise when the angel told her that she had found favor with God and would give birth to His Son! I doubt she ran through the streets, knocking on doors and yelling her news to the townspeople. Instead, she quietly prepared for the momentous occasion by spending three months with her cousin Elizabeth and trusting God completely to bring about something divine.

Now think about the birth of Christ. There were no paparazzi crowding around the manger, eager to get that first glimpse of the infant Savior or the first interview with the new parents. No, other than the bellows of the cattle, the baa-ing of the sheep, and the cries of the baby, I imagine the manger scene was pretty quiet in the stillness of the night. We get glimpses of Mary's personality throughout the Gospels as Jesus grows up and begins his ministry. Always, she personifies humility, obedience, and love in a quiet way.

Sometimes, in our busy, loud lives, we need to turn off the noise to hear God's voice and His will for our lives. In 1 Kings 19:11–13, we read about Elijah waiting for the Lord to pass by. First comes a powerful wind that tears apart the mountains, then an earthquake, and then a fire. But the Lord didn't come in those fierce, forceful elements. He came in a gentle whisper.

One of my favorite things to do during December is to turn off everything except the Christmas tree lights after everyone else has gone to bed. Then I sit quietly for a few minutes in the warm glow of the tree, thinking, praying, and enjoying the stillness.

Advent offers the perfect opportunity in the midst of the hectic Christmas season to slow down, turn down the noise and the lights, and reflect on the quiet, humble story of Christ's birth. It's OK to be quiet now and then; you just may hear the whisper of the Lord.

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). ■

Monica VanDerWeide is a member of Redeemer, Jackson, where she serves in the music ministry. A proud graduate of Lutheran schools (St. Peter, Richmond, and Lutheran High North, Macomb), she earned her bachelor's degree in English and German from Hillsdale College in 1995. She currently is employed as Director of Publications for Hillsdale College.



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Family Holiday Challenge

by Miriam Yakimow

The time before Christmas is often chaotic, and Advent preparations can get overlooked. Last December at St. Paul, Hamburg, we decided to find a way to encourage families to slow down by creating a Family Holiday Challenge. The challenge is designed as a competition where families earn a series of points by completing various missions. Some of the missions are designed specifically for parents, others for kids, and another category is to be completed by parents and kids together. St. Paul's hope was to create a fun approach to faith conversations, inspiring families to work together during the Advent season by saying NO to events that they feel pressured to do because they are "amazing" at Christmas time. Families are encouraged to say yes ONLY to meaningful events that focus on the holiday and that bring the whole family together.

Inspired by an idea from the *We Are KidMin* blog (wearekidmin.com), the challenge was adapted for St. Paul's in 2017

by adding aspects pertaining specifically to our Lutheran heritage, such as lighting the advent wreath and gathering together once a week during Advent for family devotions created specifically for the challenge. The idea received positive feedback from parents, kids, and grandparents in our congregation—all hoping to win! Two winners were designated for the challenge: the team with the most points earned and a team that would be randomly chosen from the completed forms.

Here's how the challenge worked: Families were given a poster listing various missions to be completed from December 1–January 6. Missions were designed to benefit families physically, emotionally, and spiritually, offering a wide menu of options.

Everyone gets into the action. For example, parents can earn

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Why Santa Claus DOESN'T NOT Visit the Parsonage

by Dennis Matyas

When I was a young man, I religiously listened to a Christian radio station in Detroit. (Full disclosure: I did not confess the Lutheran faith until I was 20 years old.) I found the show to be informative and challenging, as well as provocative for the myriad subjects the host presented that were hitherto unknown by me. Moreover, I was always impressed by the radio host's ability to present a Christian issue that was contentious among his listeners, who hailed from every Christian denomination under the sun.

Without fail, every Christmas the show turned its gaze onto the cultural degradation (perceived or otherwise) of the holiday season. Caller after caller would proffer their negative opinions about the phrase "Happy Holidays," as if by saying such one was denying the birth of Jesus Christ. More callers would call in and declare proudly that they do not celebrate Christmas because December 25th was once a pagan holiday, as if by naming December 25th as the day to celebrate, Pope Julius I (in 336 AD) was selling his soul to the devil and condemning all of Christendom to a liturgical guilt by association. But the *pièce de résistance*, the mother of all Christmas controversies, was Santa—whose name many callers pointed out was an anagram for Satan. The argument, as it goes, is that if a parent convinces a child of Santa Claus, what's to stop that child from denying Jesus once they realize Mom and Dad were lying about Santa?

As staunch of a funda-gelical as I was at that time (that's both a Fundamentalist and an American Evangelical), even I wanted to come to Santa's defense. "Wait a minute. I grew up with Santa Claus. I believed in Santa Claus. I also went to church. I was also taught that Christmas was Jesus' birthday. I am solidly a follower of Christ, but I have many fond memories of writing Christmas lists and mailing them to Santa, setting out cookies and milk, and searching the snow for reindeer prints on Christmas morning."

But now I'm an adult, a father of four young American children, and a Lutheran pastor. What do I do with Santa Claus now? Certainly my primary goal of parenting is that all my children love Jesus forever, and my wife and I are zealously deliberate about instilling this love in them. Yet Santa Claus is all about rewarding children for their good behavior—isn't that distracting from what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown?

Maybe. But I am reminded of a letter that Martin Luther

once wrote to his son Hans. Hans was just a young boy at the time, and the good doctor painted a wondrous picture of a "beautiful garden," available only to little children who say their prayers and learn their lessons. Was Luther deliberately lying to his son? Well ... sure. But I am a father of young children and I understand what he was doing. Simply put, he was enticing his child to learn his lessons and say his prayers, after which he would be rewarded with pony rides, and "golden fifes and drums and little silver crossbows."

This sounds to me an awful lot like Santa Claus, only slightly less insane. To wit: up on the North Pole there's a fat man working a sweat shop of little people who flies around with reindeer on Christmas Eve and gives presents to good little boys and girls. So you better be good, for goodness' sake. Now go to bed and stay there before Santa sees his shadow and we have eleven more months without Christmas.

Is this lying to our children? Well ... sure. But there's magic in that lie, as surely as there's magic under Frosty's old top hat. There's the warm sensation that comes from our Christmas traditions. There's the tree, the lights, the egg nog, the music, the warm clothes on cold nights, the reindeer with the bright red nose. Can't this and more be allowed in our Christian homes without worrying that such memories will distract us from Jesus?

I say, with all the certainty of the shrug of my shoulders, "Sure." But then again, in my house, Santa Claus is staunchly peripheral to our daily lives. I don't put my kids to bed reminding them that Santa is watching; I put them to bed with the Lord's Prayer, and with stories of God working through His people. Santa could come or not, and I couldn't care less one way or the other. But *Jesus* is every day. Church is every week (sometimes twice). Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving are essential parts of our family devotion to God. Santa? I'm not particularly threatened by him. So if he sneaks into our house once a year and helps my kids behave, more power to him.

To be sure, there's a breaking point: if your children look forward to Christmas because of Santa bringing presents, yet cannot say the Lord's Prayer or sing any hymns to Jesus because you only take them to church twice a year, you

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Photos by kajakiki/Stock



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

People of Hope ... Vigorously Making Known the Love of Christ

**Our urban ministries are helping urban families
connect the dots in their lives. Please help.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Here it is ... it's almost Christmas again! It doesn't seem possible another year has passed since I last wrote to you a Christmas greeting and year-end letter. As we enter this holy time of year, please accept the wishes from the entire Maier family for a joy-filled Advent and Christmas season. May the Holy Spirit be in and through you daily as you rejoice in, and celebrate, the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If this letter was a sermon, I would title it simply, *Connecting the Dots*. I understand it may not have a traditional Christmas sound to it, but as you continue to read, I pray the importance of this theme becomes apparent.

The society we live in today is changing rapidly. Everything—from technology, to attitudes about church, parenting, marriage, and gender identification, just to mention a few—is changing at a rapid pace. Yet, here we are in the midst of this as people of faith, living our lives as servants of Christ, doing what we can to be a bright light in a darkening world.

Is this a challenge? You bet it is, but we dare not stop working for the glory of God. *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14).*

What is it that keeps us going? The answer is much simpler than you may think. Our faith in Jesus Christ is the dot that we are connected to that makes everything else in our lives possible. Through our relationship with Jesus, all the other dots that we are,

Jesus



and need to be connected to, are possible.

Have you ever stopped to think how many dots we are all connected to? Church, family, occupation, community, and the multitude of dots within each one of these. Just take family, for example, and think about the perhaps hundreds of dots that are connected through our family relationships.

This begs the next question: What happens to those who are not connected to Jesus? Again, the answer is simple—they will never experience eternal life with Him. As sad as this may be to hear, we know that there is still hope for each and every person who does not yet know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

That is why it is our responsibility as followers of Christ to open the door, to connect the dots for them, and then let the Holy Spirit change their hearts. We in the Michigan District are People of Hope. You are reading this letter because you are a person of hope, and I thank God that you are.

I also thank God for our Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E) ministries in Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, and Benton Harbor. They, too, are filled with People of Hope working tirelessly each day to connect those they serve to the eternal, life-giving Jesus. Pastor Bodley, Pastor Yops, Pastor Trinklein, and Pastor Roth are all men of great hope connecting the dots in their communities so children and families will have even their most basic needs for food and clothing met.

But it doesn't stop there. They will also assist families overcome other major obstacles in their daily journeys through life, such as job training and employment, literacy and computer skills training, legal issues, health services, and social services, among many others. The four Sports Camps/VBS programs this past summer alone touched hundreds of children's lives.

But the most important aspect of A2E by far is "the dot" with which they connect those they serve to the Lord Jesus. A dot that, when connected, leads to baptisms, confirmations, marriages and, most importantly, eternal life—the greatest of all gifts that comes through Jesus Himself.

It is for this reason I am asking you to personally support this vital A2E urban ministry through your generous gift this Christmas season. Your gift will not only help the hundreds of people served through A2E by making positive changes in their lives today, but it may very well help them eternally.

Please prayerfully consider what you can give financially to help make a difference, and help our A2E pastors and staff in their efforts to connect the final dot ... the one to Jesus. Thank you in advance for helping to change a life today, tomorrow, and eternally.

A blessed Christmas to you and yours,

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

P.S. Your gift to A2E, an Innovative Missional Ministry supported by the **Here We Stand** campaign, will receive a 10% match through the generosity of the Michigan District Church Extension Fund. Thank you.



Yes, President Maier, I would like to support the Innovative Missional Ministry Initiative of **Here We Stand!**

Name _____
Street Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

*Please make checks payable to Michigan District, LCMS
and send to: Attn: Development Department
Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48105*

My gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.

DECEMBER 2018

Shepherd of the Lakes of Brighton Partners with CEF for Expanded Educational Facilities



A newly designed youth room allows students a place to relax and learn about Jesus.

“Many in our congregation invest in CEF products, and the loan process is seamless and simple. They understand the issues.”

– Pastor Mark Milatz
Shepherd of the Lakes
Lutheran Church, Brighton

Maintaining a high-quality, Christian education experience as an alternative to public schools is not an easy mission. Not only do you have to provide a first-rate scholastic experience, but you also have to make sure that the other elements of a thriving school – extra curricular opportunities and state-of-the-art science and art centers – also are available.

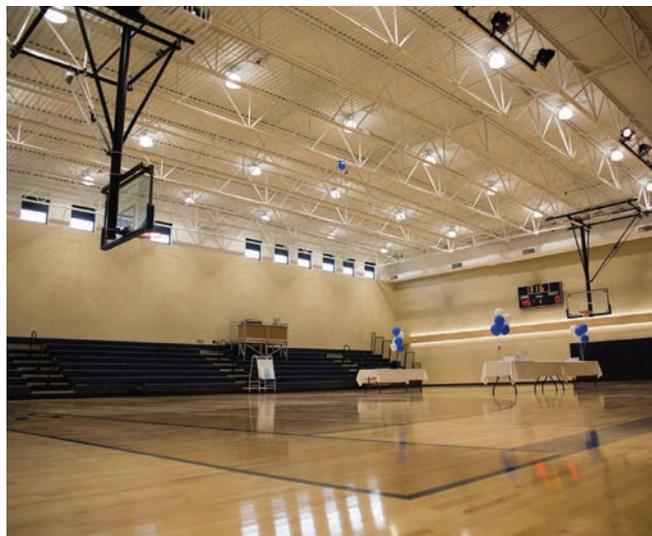
Faced with the need to upgrade its preschool through eighth-grade facilities, Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran Church in Brighton, Michigan, did what many other congregations in the Michigan District have done: they turned to Church Extension Fund to provide the necessary financial support to bring their vision to fruition. “We utilized CEF funding to move our middle school out of the portable classrooms it had been in and into a 22,000-square-foot addition,” explains Pastor Mark Milatz. Pastor Milatz notes that the new addition is a permanent, physical connection to the church — which puts bricks and mortar on a relationship between the church and school that has been critical all along.

“We serve students from throughout the area,” Pastor Milatz says. “Many of the students come from families that attend other churches and many come from families with no church home, and this leads to growth in our congregation.” Pastor Milatz estimates that last year alone, 20 families joined the church after exposure through the school – which has an enrollment of 275.

The new addition, which was dedicated on August 19, is quite impressive. The centerpiece is a new gymnasium, which expands not only the physical education offerings during school hours, but allows the school’s athletic teams to host events and to practice in their own facilities. This makes scheduling much easier, as coaches and administrative staff don’t have to work around the time constraints of outside facilities.



Brand new lockers were installed as part of the renovation.



The new gymnasium allows the schools athletic teams to host events and practice in their own facilities.

The new space also has three new classrooms, improved art and music centers and a science lab, as well as a media room. All of which helps Shepherd of the Lakes remain an appealing alternative to the public schools for families looking for a Christian educational environment.

And while an undertaking of such size can seem daunting, the decision to work with CEF was easy, according to Pastor Milatz. “We enjoy the partnership,” he says. “Many in our congregation invest in CEF products, and the loan process is seamless and simple. They understand the issues. Jodi Gonzalez (CEF’s Assistant Vice President-Loan Manager) is amazing to work with.”

The fact that CEF staff attended the dedication service says a lot, Pastor Milatz believes. “They always have the best interest of the church at heart – and that makes all the difference.”



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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A "By the Numbers" look at the *Here We Stand* Campaign

(through November 6, 2018)



Here We Stand

\$5,678,711.84	Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$4,780,415.39	Cash received which includes \$400,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$686,975.35	Outstanding commitments (pledges)
1,308	Total Contributors
1,171	Individual Contributors
137	Congregations Contributing
37.2%	% of Michigan District Congregations currently participating
8,773	Participants in the "Crafted By Truth" Bible Reading Program
1,149	Participants who have completed the Bible Reading Program
13,300	Attendees at the 500th Anniversary Worship Service at the Breslin Center
\$1,147,156.12	Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$2,171,889.14	Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$ 854,242.62	Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$1,293,910.87	Total given/pledged for International Ministries

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

\$15 Student

\$20 General

See event page for Livestream details.



Be Constant in PRAYER

Romans 12:12

Speakers:

- Rev. Dr. Victor J. Belton - The Grace of Prayer
- Connie Denninger - Doorways Into Prayer
- Rev. Christopher K. Paavola - The Forgotten Prayer
- Rev. C. Bryan Wolfmueller - St. Paul's School of Prayer

Theological Conference

Our Savior, Lansing · February 2, 2019

michigandistrict.org/theological19

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

Help Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Public Square on January 1

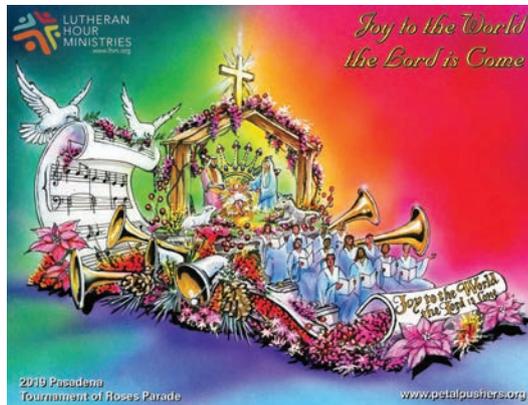
The Lutheran Hour Ministries float in this year's Tournament of Roses Parade is entitled: *Joy to the World the Lord is Come*.

The mission of the Lutheran Hour Float Committee of the Southern California District of the International Lutheran Laymen's League is to provide a Christian witness and the message of hope in Jesus Christ to the unchurched who view the float in person or through other media.

The project relies solely on the generous support of our many Christian friends. It is totally self-funded by volunteers with NO salaried staff. These are ways you can contribute:

- **Sportsfan:** a gift of \$2,000 or more receives 2 tickets to the 2019 Rose Bowl Game held on 1/1/2019 and a Parade Program. For details, contact Dick Gast at 949.458.0606 or chairman@petalpushers.org.
- **Pillar:** a gift of \$1,000 or more receives 2 tickets to observe the parade in the reviewing stands with the LHM Delegation and a Parade Program.
- **Builder:** a gift of \$500 or more receives a Red Embroidered Petal Pushers® Polar Fleece Jacket and a Parade Program.
- **Founder:** a gift of \$250 or more receives a 2019 Petal Pushers® Sweatshirt and a Parade Program.
- **Century:** a gift of \$100 or more receives a 2019 Tournament of Roses Parade Program (mailed in December).
- **Provider:** a gift of \$75 or more receives a 2019 Lutheran Hour Ministries Float Pin.
- **Patron:** a gift of \$50 or more receives a Lutheran Hour Ministries Float photo brochure and an LHM Float Magnet.
- **Supporter:** a gift of \$25 or more receives a Float photo brochure (mailed in February).

You may mail your gift to: The Lutheran Hour Float Committee; PO Box 20044; Riverside CA 92516-0044.



LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE



A TIMELINE CELEBRATING
The Mighty Mite Box!



WHAT IS THIS BOX FOR?
THE 75 YEAR PURPOSE
OF LWML: MISSION



Give the Gift of Mites!

This Christmas, please consider filling a Mite box and returning it to the LWML. What better way to show your mission heart!

Based on the Biblical account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4), the Mite Box is intended for regular contributions of "mites"—offerings above and beyond the support given to congregations and the LCMS. Mite Box contributions amount to millions of dollars that fund district and national mission grants and implement the LWML program.

No matter which Mite Box you use, they will all do what they are meant to do—provide funding for missions and to further God's kingdom. Check out the Michigan District LWML website for where to send your Mites.

<https://lwmlmichigan.org/>

Martin Luther High School Expands

Martin Luther High School (MLHS), formerly located in Holt, Mich., has purchased Plymouth Congregational Church in Lansing for its new facility. The High School has been renting space from St. Matthew, Holt for the past four years and is poised to expand. For the first half of the 2018-19 school year, the high school is renting space at New Covenant Church and School in Lansing.

The high school finalized the purchase of the building in September and construction began immediately.

MLHS provides an innovative learning environment that includes Project-Based Learning (PBL), Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL), STEAM and STEM programs, a strong Lutheran faith-based education, and a comprehensive music program. The High School offers a Makerspace, Computer and Robotics Lab, as well as other cutting-edge technology and innovative experiences. They also have a boys basketball team and its mascot is the Maverick.

Maverick is a fitting symbol for this school where education and innovation meet and where students benefit from a revolutionary and hands-on teaching strategy.

MLHS has a diverse student body and every year hosts international students from countries like Korea, Puerto Rico, Vietnam, and China.

MLHS is scheduled to be fully operational in its new location starting in January 2019.

Michigan District, LCMS Superintendent of Schools Travis Grulke attended the school's open house at the new location and said, *"It was a blessing to share in the excitement at the Open House on September 16th. The new facility, once it is remodeled, will be a great match for the high school's unique learning environment and provide the space for future growth. I look forward to seeing what the Good Lord has in store for the students, staff, and families of Martin Luther High School!"*

To learn more about this innovative school, please visit martinlutherhighschool.org.



St. John Lutheran School Cross Country Girls' Team is National Champion

Congratulations to St. John, Rochester, and its Girls' Cross Country Team for being crowned 2018 National Champions at the Lutheran Schools National Cross Country Championship Meet in October at Concordia University Mequon. All 9 members of the St. John girls' team, as well as 2 members from the boys' team competed in Nationals against nearly 500 runners from around the country.

In addition to the team win, several members of the team earned spots on the All-American Teams, including Madeleine Barge, who earned 2nd Team All-American honors (and 10th place in the meet), and Abby Rice, Lily Myers, and Henry Barge earning 3rd Team All-American honors. This is the first National Championship won by any athletic team at St. John Lutheran School.

The St. John team's winning streak included earning 1st place at several events in a row this season: North Suburban Lutheran Athletic Association League Meet at Lutheran North, the Lutheran Schools State Meet at Oakland University, and the Eastside Invitational in competition against several area public schools. A Banner Raising was held on November 15 to recognize these students and coaches and give glory to God.

The team is coached by St. John Athletic Director Mr. Todd Bauer and by Oakland University Director of Track and Field, Mr. Paul Rice.



Connect with “Hearts for Jesus” this February

As his fourth Lutheran Association of Missionary Pilots (LAMP) Vacation Bible School season was completed, LAMP’s Pastor-Pilot Dennis Ouellette of Indiana shared that the Lord has endlessly provided blessings to the northern Indigenous communities through His servants—the volunteer missionary teams and himself. Relationships with both the teams and the communities have deepened and grown stronger, including a greater level of trust between them and Pastor Dennis. The more important aspect of ministry is that the relationships continue even when not in the communities. Social Media, email, and phone calls not only keep Pastor Dennis in contact with communities and teams all year, but allow the provision of the spiritual support needed, especially when they face injury, illness, and the death of loved ones.



Read more about this ministry in Ouellette’s blog at lightabovemyath.blogspot.ca. LAMP is a cross-cultural ministry sharing Jesus Christ with God’s people in remote areas of Canada. If God has placed a call for missions on your heart, please visit lampministry.org, call 800.307.4036 ext. 1, or send an email to shelly@lampministry.org.

In February, Lutheran Schools in the Michigan District will be supporting LAMP through its annual *Hearts For Jesus* project. Since 1972, students have given over 1.2 million dollars to numerous causes that benefit children. For more information on how you can become involved, visit michigandistrict.org/schools/services/hearts-for-jesus.

LWR Gifts

Give a gift and change a life through Lutheran World Relief Gifts. Did you know that chicks take just 120 days to mature and provide a lasting income for farmers and their families? In just four short months, a whole flock of chickens can start producing its own chicks; and you could give a hen and chicks today. Choose from various critters, farming equipment, and supplies to help farmers and their families thrive.

Check out the full catalog online at gifts.lwr.org to support Lutheran World Relief in finding long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty.



Grace, Leslie Donates \$3,000 to Aid Homeless Children

Members of Grace, Leslie presented a check for \$3,000 to Mr. Jeff Manthei, Leslie Public Schools Superintendent. The gift was raised by members of Grace through freewill offerings to provide homeless Leslie public school students with school meals, clothing, and school supplies.



Pictured (l-r) Steve Patzer, Mrs. Wendy Hockley, Jeff Manthei and James Wood.

James Wood, Leslie school board treasurer and Grace Lutheran chairman, stated, “We are blessed to give the Leslie School District \$3,000 to help our homeless students. Most people would never know it, but we have homeless kids here. The people of the congregation felt the need to help them directly. These kids are all our kids.”

Special Recognition

St. Paul, Albion Celebrates 150 years

In 1868, Lutheran minister Friedrich Wilhelm traveled to Albion with the explicit purpose of establishing a Lutheran church. His quest was successful, and on October 25, 1868, he was able to conduct his first worship service in Albion; and now, St. Paul, Albion is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Wilhelm left a very detailed account of the trials and tribulations he overcame in carrying out his task. He tells how he built the first Lutheran church in Albion, not only by preaching, evangelizing, and organizing, but through active involvement in repairing, restoring, and financing of the congregation's first church building. The congregation consisted of 54 members and their families, all of them German. Thus the church quickly became known as "the German church," though it was duly named and later incorporated as "Evangelische Lutherische St. Paulus Kirche" (St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church).

As the congregation increased in size, another church was built in 1888 and, sixty years later, the congregation's current building was dedicated on the edge of town.

In 1984, St. Paul's launched the "Little Lambs of Jesus Preschool" and in the early summer of 2013 it was moved to another location and opened as Little Lambs of Jesus Preschool & Childcare Center. In 2015, St. Paul opened a Kid-to-Kid Shop in its educational wing offering reasonably priced, gently used, clean children's clothing.

St. Paul ministers to the community through its worship services, preschool and childcare center, Kid-to-Kid Shop, layette program, Vacation Bible School, Christmas food basket program, free Thanksgiving Dinner, and Community Carols—The Sounds of Christmas.

Behnke Installed at Faith, Bridgeport

In October, Rev. Timothy J. Behnke (pictured first row, second from right) was installed as pastor at Faith, Bridgeport. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. with a Master of Divinity degree and was ordained in 2008. Prior to Faith Lutheran, he served River of Faith, Waterville, Ohio and St. John, Brant. His first career was as an Electrical Test Engineer for Smiths Aerospace in Grand Rapids. He also served 10 years in the United States Air National Guard.

Rev. Behnke is excited to see what God has planned for him and Faith congregation as they work together in Bridgeport and the surrounding area. One of his favorite Bible verses is Philippians 4:13, "*I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me.*"

Rev. Behnke and his wife, Heidi, have three children.



In September, Deacon Alfred Kersten was ordained and installed as a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) at Immanuel, Alpena. Deacon (now Rev.) Al was one of four Licensed Lay Deacons in the Michigan District, LCMS who were approved for SMP Colloquy this year.



Family Holiday Challenge continued from page 3

points for taking a nap, going for a walk, or talking about Christmas memories. Kids might write thank you cards, pray for missionaries, memorize a Bible verse, compliment siblings, and the like.



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Missions for parents and kids to complete together include activities like using an Advent wreath in family devotion, watch a Christmas movie, going on a family walk, hike, or bike ride, and finding a service opportunity to do together. One church member remarked, “Thanks for encouraging us to use our Advent wreath again!”

While some of the missions are just-for-the-fun-of-it, most of them are designed to keep the family together during the Advent season while providing opportunities to have “God talk,” serve others, or be together without being busy. This was a great experience for the families who participated last Advent season. Families were encouraged in the Word and were focused to spend time together in faith conversations and activities. The greatest difficulty was finding ways to encourage more families to participate. We hope to run the challenge again this Advent/Christmas, but instead of a paper-only challenge, we will be using digital means via Mail Chimp and Facebook to share ideas on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. We hope this delivery tool will serve as a different way to remind

families to focus on Christ during this Advent/Christmas.

For more information about the Family Holiday Challenge or to see the missions in detail, visit stpaulhamburg.com/2017/family-holiday-challenge-starts-december-1/. ■

Miriam Yakimow is Director of Family Ministry at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Hamburg. Her family moved to Michigan in 2017 so her husband could take a call as Professor of Theology at Concordia University Ann Arbor. She enjoys connecting faith at church with faith at home, and loves seeing when various faith milestones inspire families to make connections in the home.

Why Santa Claus Doesn't Visit the Parsonage

continued from page 4

are failing as a parent. But can't the faithful Christian household let their imaginations run wild with dancing sugar plum fairies without being attacked by overly pious Grinches?



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This pastor says sure. Just make sure the kids know it was Dad, not Santa, who fronted the bill for all those presents under the tree.

“Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.” ■

Rev. Dennis W. Matyas serves St. Paul Lutheran Church, Bay City (Frankenlust). He and his wife, Valerie, have four children.

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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Behnke, Timothy J. (Brant) to Faith, Bridgeport
Boerger, Paul M. (Rogers City) to St. Michael, Rogers City
Kersten, Alfred A. (Colloquy) to SMP, Immanuel, Alpena
Nuttman, Quenton T. (St. Peter, St. Johns) to Our Redeemer,
Hutchinson, KS
Richardson, Gale D. (Colloquy) to SMP, Beautiful Savior, Wellston
Siefert, Gary L. (Farmington Hills) to IIP, St. Paul's, Wenatchee, WA
Tinetti, Ryan P. (Spokane, WA) to Trinity, Arcadia

Status Change

Chaffee, Phillip W. (Rockford) to SMP-Emeritus
Wollberg, Jeffrey N. (Bellevue) to Emeritus

Transferred In

Nuffer, Richard T. (Indiana District) as Emeritus

Called Home

Brown, Robert E. (New Era)

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Burhop, Heather (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Immanuel, Saginaw
Stephens, Elizabeth (St. Mark, Battle Creek) to Trinity, Mission, KS
Thomas, Terri (Candidate) to Lutheran Special Education Ministries,
Farmington Hills

Change of Status

Colley, Ann (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Emeritus
Jones, Amanda (St. Paul, Flint) to Candidate
Wills, Paul (Candidate) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Millen, Jai (Candidate) to Iowa District West
Roedel, Karen (Candidate) to South Wisconsin District
Stephens, Elizabeth (St. Mark, Battle Creek) to Kansas District

Resigned from the Roster

Neumeyer, Paul

School Closings

Pilgrim Lutheran Preschool, Essexville

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



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Calendar of Events

DECEMBER

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

JANUARY

21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
21-22 Michigan District Board of Directors
Marriott Auburn Hills, Pontiac

FEBRUARY

2 Be Constant in Prayer
Our Savior, Lansing
9 FFPN District Workshop Event 9
Location TBD
14-15 Principals' Snowtire Conference
Crowne Plaza East, Lansing
18 Presidents' Day

MARCH

6 Ash Wednesday
19 Michigan District Board of Directors
Wellspring Lutheran Services, Flint
29 School Committee Meeting
District Office, Ann Arbor

APRIL

5-7 The Katie 2019
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City Riverfront
Office Personnel Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City Riverfront
14 Palm Sunday
19 Good Friday
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
21 Easter
24 Administrative Professionals' Day

MAY

7-8 South & East Pastors' Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
8 Joint Lutheran Schools Celebration
Saginaw Valley University
8-9 Circuit Visitors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
12 Mother's Day
13-14 West Pastors' Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton, Grand Rapids
15-16 Intentional Interim Conference
Michindoh, Hillsdale
20-22 North & East Pastors' Conference
Little Bear East/Breakers Resort, St. Ignace
27 Memorial Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
29 Board of Directors' Meeting
Location TBD

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