

FEBRUARY 2019

michigan IN TOUCH

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



HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

Bartimaeus and an Invitation to us ALL to Pray

by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” And

continued on page 2

CLIMO - The Gospel of the visual age/lightstock, LLC

michigan IN TOUCH

Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, President
Debby Fall, Editorial Manager

Official Periodical of the Michigan District
of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
February 2019, Volume 18, No. 2
ISSN: 1538-8115 (print)
ISSN: 2331-8619 (online)

Linda Ekong, Art Director
Elisa Schulz, Staff Writer/Copy Editor

©2019 Michigan District, LCMS, Ann Arbor, Michigan. *Michigan In Touch* is published monthly by the Michigan District and inserted into *The Lutheran Witness* and distributed to subscribers 11 times a year. It is also available online at www.michiganintouch.com. Reproduction of articles is permissible with written permission of the Michigan District Communications Department and should give credit to *Michigan In Touch*. References to resources and websites for further information are included in *Michigan In Touch* for the potential use by individuals and congregations. Resources not associated with or published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or Concordia Publishing House® may contain helpful programmatic information but may vary in doctrine from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Please use discretion or consult your pastor on doctrinal issues. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (ESV).



Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

888.225.2111
intouch@michigandistrict.org
michigandistrict.org

Table of Contents

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Healthy Congregations |
| 4 | Great Commission |
| 6 | Great Compassion |
| 9 | Healthy Workers |
| 10 | Church Extension Fund |
| 12 | Here We Stand |
| 14 | LLL, LWML |
| 15 | News and Events |
| 17 | Special Recognition |
| 20 | Calls and Roster Update |
| 20 | Calendar of Events |

continued from page 1

Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way (Mark 10:46–52 ESV).

On my January (2019) trip to the Holy Land, as we were leaving Jericho, it was easy to think about Jesus walking down a road with His disciples on His way out of the city. It was then that a blind man named Bartimaeus began calling out to Him, saying, ***“Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!”*** The people around him told him to be quiet, but he called out even louder, ***“Have mercy on me!”***

Jesus stopped and said, ***“Call him.”*** The people around Bartimaeus told him that Jesus was calling for him, so he jumped up and approached Jesus.

Jesus straightforwardly asked him one question: ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** Bartimaeus simply replied, ***“I want to regain my sight.”***

Then Jesus said something that surprised me as I was rereading this story. He said, ***“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”***

“Your faith has made you well”? What did Bartimaeus do that showed any faith?

- He wasn’t like the men who tore open the roof of the home where Jesus was teaching so they could lower their sick friend into His presence (*Luke 5:19*);
- He wasn’t like the woman with the issue of blood who fought through the crowd so she could touch the hem of His garment (*Mark 5:25–34*);
- He wasn’t like the centurion who came to Jesus and said, *“Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed”* (*Matthew 8:8*).

When you read this story—especially when you compare it with others who came to Jesus with requests—you can’t help but wonder: Where was any demonstration of faith by Bartimaeus? All he did was ask!

Interesting. Maybe that’s the point of this account.

Maybe that’s the lesson. The account of Bartimaeus receiving his sight

teaches us lessons both about faith and prayer: **Asking is an act of faith.**

I was on an airplane once (not on this trip) where I noticed five or six empty seats in First Class when I walked past. Let me say as an aside that First Class is definitely different, comfortable, and fun ... so I do remember being “bumped” once to First Class. On this flight before take-off, the flight attendant walked the aisle making sure we were all buckled in when the man across the aisle from me stopped her to ask a question. The question was somewhere along the lines of *“There are empty seats in first class ... can I have a free upgrade?”* She smiled and said, *“Sure, I think we can do that.”* The man collected his belongings and walked through the curtain that separates the castes of American society, taking his seat in the luxurious First Class, where I’m certain he was pampered for the duration of the flight.

Knowing there were still 4 or 5 empty seats remaining in First Class I WANTED TO—but just couldn’t bring myself to—ask if I could also move up to First Class. In reality, I didn’t want to experience the embarrassment of the flight attendant saying, *“Just because I did it for him, doesn’t mean that I will do it for you. Stay put.”* So, I didn’t ask.

The book of James says, ***“You do not have because you do not ask.”*** (Be sure to read the wider context of *James 4:2, 3*). That was certainly true in my case that day. It’s true in many of our lives—day in and day out. We do not have because we do not ask. **All** Bartimaeus could do was ask to be healed—and it was enough. It demonstrated faith on his part, and consequently, Jesus healed him. Asking, in itself, is an act of faith.

Having read through the story on the bus as we were leaving Jericho, I think there are three things this historical account teaches us about faith and about talking with and asking God in prayer and petition. First of all ...

Ask Immediately

As soon as Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he immediately began calling out to Him: ***“Jesus, Son***

of David, have mercy on me!" I don't know how much Bartimaeus knew about Jesus—what stories he had heard—but when Jesus came his way he made up his mind that he would not let this opportunity pass him by. He immediately began to call on the name of Jesus, and he continued to call on the name of Jesus until Jesus heard him.

For me, anyway, this points out a problem that I confess I struggle with and that I do believe many of us have: prayer is not our first option, our "go to". Oftentimes, we try to fix things ourselves, without getting God involved.

- Too often, we think that we can handle the situation more efficiently than God. After all, he might make us wait;
- He'll ask us to repent;
- He's likely to make us re-evaluate and re-organize our priorities.

It's easier to try to do things on our own. Then, as a last resort, if nothing else works, we'll try prayer.

I think that kind of asking doesn't demonstrate faith. Asking in faith requires that we ask immediately. Asking in faith requires that we turn to God as a first resort, not a last option. He should be the one we call **first**.

When we don't call on God first, we're demonstrating a lack of faith; a foolish lack of faith, because God really can help us with any problem we face in life. And, like Bartimaeus, we should continue to call on Jesus until he answers. Jesus issued that invitation when he said, "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*" (*Matthew 7:7*).

Those verbs—ask, seek, knock (notice that if you take the first letter of each verb and put them together, it spells "ask")—can be translated from the original Greek as "keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking." It shouldn't be a onetime request on our part, but a *continual* prayer. Bartimaeus asked immediately, and he kept on asking Jesus.



©LUMO - The Gospels for the visual age/Lightstock, LLC

The second thing this story teaches us about asking in faith is ...

Ask Defiantly

"Defiantly"? Yes. Here's what I mean. When Bartimaeus began calling out to Jesus, we are told ... *many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (v.48).

Bartimaeus is just a blind beggar. What right does he have to call out to, much less approach, Jesus? He needs to keep his place and keep his mouth shut! But he defied

continued on page 18

God is *Not Done* in Detroit

by Tyler Cronkright



Photos courtesy of Family of God, Detroit

As Family of God Church in Detroit continues to grow, leaders are constantly seeking opportunities to expose the children to other events and activities that can, hopefully, have profound impact on their faith formation.

This past October, five kids from Family of God (FOG) had the opportunity to attend one of the weekend confirmation retreats at Camp Arcadia. During these weekends, middle-school-aged kids from congregations all over the state of Michigan and beyond come together for a weekend of fellowship, games and, most importantly, Bible study and spiritual growth. This was a follow-up to Family of God's summer field trip program where young people are mentored in their walk of faith in such a dark neighborhood. With some anxiety, Pastor Hill, Amanda Becker, and I headed north from Detroit on a Friday night.

When we arrived at Camp Arcadia, we all checked in and settled in the rooms. There was an opening worship time that was led by Pastor Brian West from Trinity, Clinton Township. Concordia University Ann Arbor's Pastor Ryan Peterson led the devotion that night, as he did the sessions on Saturday. Our kids seemed to respond well to this opening time of worship. Most of them were very engaged and listening to what was going on. Praise God for that!

Over the course of the day, there were three sessions where the kids sat and listened to Pastor Ryan lead them through a Bible study about the Holy Spirit. Two of our kids in particular were very locked in and listening. In between these sessions, there were games, some free time to explore the camp and bond with other kids from other youth groups, and even time to spend with each other. Perhaps the most impactful time was during Sunday morning worship when Amanda and Pastor Jim had the privilege of reminding each of our kids of the

promise of Baptism. This is always a critical point for our kids. In times of darkness, times of struggle, and times of grief, we do everything in our power to make sure that they know how much they are loved; loved by us but, more importantly, loved by their Creator God.

Now, this all sounds great, right? It was, but it came with its fair share of struggles. One of the things that stuck out to me was the dramatic difference in the culture depending upon where each kid grew up. We know that growing up in Southwest Detroit is much different than growing up in Lutheran schools in the suburbs. But to see that actually play out was something else. It made my heart break all over again for our children that we get to minister to each and every day at Family of God. It reminded me of why Family of God exists, why I want to be a pastor, and how grateful I am for the love and support of Pastor Jim, Amanda, and all of FOG volunteers.

Thank you for not giving up on our children, even when the culture and societal norms tell us that they have no hope. That is simply not true. In Christ, there is always hope.

Amanda shared with me that one of our FOG girls, was reading her Bible and journaling, completely unprompted. Dear brothers and sisters, God is not done in Detroit. We may not always see the fruits of the seeds that we sow at FOG, but when we do, especially on a weekend like this, it is a reason for giving thanks. We can't wait to attend again next year.

For more information about the ministry at FOG, or to read more stories like this, visit fogdetroit.com. ■

Tyler Cronkright is a CUAA graduate in Family Life and Social Work. He started his practicum at Family of God, Detroit in 2013 and hasn't left since. He is now preparing to be an SMP pastor.

How the Lord Provides Comfort

by Paula Isakson

I would often speak with my father about what was going through his mind (and my mom's) when I walked in darkness. I look back and wonder what in the world I was thinking—why did I go on the path that I did? Sometimes I feel a deep regret for choosing the path of the world, wondering how my life would or could have been different.

As a believer now, I do not hold on to the past, but instead I realize that the LORD is able to use my past experiences to offer comfort to parents. Instead of hanging my head in shame, He is able to use those experiences as a means of encouragement as I reach out to parents through Faith Family Reunion. He reminds me of His love and encourages me as I read His Word. In His Word, He confirms my identity as His child and how much He loves me; then, through the Holy Spirit, His love is demonstrated through me when I reach out to parents. The LORD has made me realize that my past is not lost but purposeful in my calling today.

It can be very painful for you as a parent to see your children leave the faith in Jesus Christ. You may look back at the way that you raised your children and wonder if you could have done a better job sharing the message of grace and the wonderful gift of freedom that Jesus Christ offers us. It can be easy to hang your head in shame and give up, but I wonder what would happen if you were to reach out to other parents going through the same situation. Could you perhaps be a comfort to another parent and maybe just be in the right place at the right time when they needed you most? What if you could share your struggles with them and they could in return share what they are going through? Do you think that just knowing you are not alone could provide the very comfort you need?

We don't know the future, nor can we predict it, only the LORD knows. When I look back to the last ten or fifteen years, I had no idea that I would today love the Lord and feel such a call in my life. My parents had no

idea that I would come back ... but the LORD did. He had a plan and that plan was for me to offer comfort to parents going through the same situation my parents went through. The LORD can often take the very issues that destroy our relationship with Him and turn them around, so that we become champions for HIM. Those destructive situations of our past can be the very path through which we are called to serve Him, because we understand them so well.

When you read His Word, listen to His voice, and reflect on the good news He offers us, remember that our LORD has a way of turning things around. I encourage you to reach out, be of comfort to one another, and trust His comfort.

Prayer: *We thank you, heavenly Father, that by your Spirit in Word and Sacrament you comfort us time and again, no matter what our circumstances may be, for you have made us your people through Baptism into Christ. Grant our children, who have left your comfort manifested in Jesus Christ, the recognition of what they have lost by going their own way and enable them by your Spirit to return to the comfort that you grant your people. We pray in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

What God's Word says

John 14:1–3 ESV

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

2 Corinthians 2:3–5 ESV

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort



© Highwaystarz Photography/Stock

with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."

John 14:15–17 ESV

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." ■

Paula Isakson grew up in a wonderful Christian home, with loving and supportive parents who raised her in the faith. But life took Paula in a different direction. She abandoned the faith of her childhood to find her own spiritual way in the world. Paula's family and friends never gave up on her. The Holy Spirit continued to work in Paula's life. Now she brings Faith Family Reunion together to share the story of a God who never gives up on His people and encourage attendees never to give up on the lost people in their lives!

Upcoming Faith Family Reunion retreats:

- February 9, 2019 | Peace, Ann Arbor
- April 27, 2019 | St. Paul, Hamburg
- June 29, 2019 | Redeemer, Jackson

25 for 25: Richly Blessed

by Derek Riddle

In the summer of 2018, Peace, Rogers City celebrated its 25th anniversary. A music-filled worship service was held, and a joyous meal in the fellowship hall was organized, including engaging speakers and presenters. Amid the excitement of decoration and preparation, the members of Peace continued to quietly add to a list posted in the narthex. This list of little and big acts of service was labeled “25 for 25.”

In late spring of 2018, the members of Peace were presented with the 25 for 25 Project. The simple goal of 25 for 25 was for individuals and small groups within the congregation to engage in 25 service projects throughout the community in recognition of 25 years of blessings since Peace’s founding in 1993.

Rev. Derek Riddle, pastor at Peace, spearheaded 25 for 25 as an appropriate and impactful part of the congregation’s anniversary celebration. “*Milestones help us look backward, but also to move forward,*” he said. “*What better way to celebrate the blessings of the past than by being a blessing to others as we look toward the future?*”

At first, Pastor Riddle wondered whether the project would catch on. For some time the list stood at only four

or five entries, the idea apparently stalled. Before too long, however, the stories came trickling in.

A mother proudly reported that her shy teenage daughter had made muffins and delivered them to the neighbors. An 89 year-old great-grandmother invited a small group into her home to teach them how to bake her specialty recipe, the one everyone begs for at bake sales. A group of ladies reported with smiles that they had cleaned up the garbage along a stretch of road. Pillowcases and stuffed animals were donated to the local shelter. An elderly man’s lunch paid for at McDonald’s. A free potato bar lunch at the VFW. A pocketful of Hershey’s Kisses distributed to strangers. Story after story of the joy of serving came rolling into the office, the warmed heart of each good-deed-doer evident on their face as they shared what they had done.

The list has now grown far beyond 25 acts of service, but members of Peace don’t seem to mind. They’re having far too much fun finding new ways of being Jesus’ hands and feet to the people around them, and showing with their lives what grace looks like.

“*The best part was their faces,*” said one Peace member, licking ice cream off his fingers after helping pass out ice cream sandwiches at the local campground. “*They couldn’t believe we were giving them something for nothing. I just told them, it’s what God does for me ... so, why not do it for others?*”

Peace has been around for 25 years. It’s a milestone to celebrate. And it’s a perfect time to see the hundreds of ways our Heavenly Father has given us to be a blessing to those around us, now and for the next 25 years. ■

Rev. J. Derek Riddle serves as pastor of Peace, Rogers City.



Carol Williams Honored Upon Her Retirement

by Elisa Schulz

Carol Williams' last day of work for the Michigan District, LCMS was December 14, 2018. She was honored by District and CEF staff on that day.

Carol is a woman of many talents. She worked as a computer programmer for Electronic Data Systems (EDS) for many years before changing careers and working as a buyer for her husband, who had acquired a business that "sold everything from flowers to pumpkins, produce to mulch, dirt, and evergreen trees; he also had a crew that did landscaping," she explains. After that, she worked for 16 months at a deli while looking for an office job. She had always regretted that she hadn't worked for the Church, and so when her husband showed her the announcement for a position at the District office that was posted in their church bulletin, she applied.

She started working the first business day of January, 2010 as administrative assistant to Bruce Braun, who was the Superintendent of Schools. She said, "*I told him I could only work here for 8 years because then I was going to retire.*" But he retired a year before her and she ended up staying on.

Carol shares that her favorite part of the job was talking with people: "*I enjoyed when someone called and asked me for something and I could do something for them. And I always enjoyed when the principals and the early childhood people came in and had meetings—especially the early childhood ones, because they were all women and we got to be close. It was always fun doing conferences with them.*"

Travis Grulke, the current Superintendent of Schools, showed appreciation for Carol's service by means of a fun adaptation of Proverbs 31, which he read during the staff party. Here are some excerpts:

10 An administrative assistant of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

11 The superintendent has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

12 She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

13 She selects documents and school statistics and works with eager hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships, bringing her completed state track meet programs from afar.

(...)

28 Her principals and early childhood directors arise



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

29 "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but an administrative assistant who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31 Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at her time of retirement.

When asked what's next, Carol said she and her husband hope to sell their current home and build.

"After that's completed, I look forward to focusing on my hobbies. I like to embroider, sew, knit, crochet, do calligraphy, paint, and read. I'd like to get more involved again with the ladies at church—they have a knitting group, the LWML, the fellowship committee—I just like getting together and helping in that way. I also might do some other volunteering at nursing homes or at hospitals rocking babies."

Carol will be missed at the office. We wish her all God's blessings upon her retirement! ■

FEBRUARY 2019

CEF Helps St. John of Fraser Branch Out



*“I am the vine; you
are the branches.
If you remain in
me and I in you,
you will bear
much fruit; apart
from me you can
do nothing.”*

– John 15:5

There is no single model to use when building or sustaining a successful church. Some congregations do it through direct mission work and outreach, some by education and community engagement, and some by supporting Synod-wide efforts and causes. Because of this diversity, Church Extension Fund does not have a one-size-fits-all approach to financially supporting churches. Few congregations show this multi-faceted approach better than St. John Lutheran Church in Fraser.

Not only have CEF grants made it possible for St. John's school to greatly expand its offerings, but the combination of grants and loans has facilitated a host of upgrades and improvements at both the church and the school.

As with many churches in the Michigan District, St. John has a campus that reflects the growth and changes of its 155-year history. The current church was built in 1987 and additions and new construction continue to play a vital role in the service of its 1,250-member congregation.

While church staff and members knew that upgrades were needed, it was important to all that the nature of those upgrades be well thought out.



"We have been working on this for almost a decade," Pastor Brad Smith says of the renovations and improvements that were officially kicked off in May with a campaign known as "Branching Out" based on the theme verse from John 15:5.

"CEF is very supportive of the work," says Pastor Smith. "They don't simply supply the money, they have worked with us for years on this. They have worked with our staff to make it all come together."

Even before the renovation project shifted into high gear, St. John had learned that CEF was awarding a grant to the school that amounted to more than \$4,500. "CEF supplied \$25 for each student," says St. John School Principal David Waltz. "This was money that we were not anticipating and it helped us with the startup costs for a new robotics team. It also allowed us to finish building our pre-school playground."

The school, which educates children from three years old through 8th Grade, also received the benefit of a CEF loan, resulting in new classrooms and increased facility capabilities. Pastor Smith applauded CEF's willingness to help fund the school projects. "The church and the school have a symbiotic relationship," Pastor Smith explains. "It is a draw for us, and it brings new people into the church. The people at CEF recognized this."

He noted that while many outside the Lutheran faith rely on the school as an alternative to public education, those who are church members receive a huge bonus— free tuition for their children. And, with class sizes that range from 13 to 25, it is a fantastic educational environment.

The church, which had not seen any significant upgrades in 30 years, saw improvements to its physical structure and to its hallmark Steiner-Reck pipe organ, a project that consisted of 3 phases:

- **Removal** – taking out all pipework (except the 10 largest pipes), mechanical action systems, organ console, and all the pipe chests
- **Repair and replacement** – cleaning, repairing, or replacing pipes; regulating and voicing of all pipes; construction of a new drawknob organ console; and construction of new pipe chests
- **Reinstallation**

The church upgrades included fire-suppression additions in the church, school and gymnasium to meet changes to codes since its original construction, as well as the addition of handicap bathrooms and stalls, which will enhance the worship experience for many in the congregation. Additionally, improvements to the heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems, plumbing and lighting will be made, as well as repairs to the exterior of the buildings.

Despite a few hiccups and delays, the construction has progressed close to the original timeline, and Pastor Smith is looking forward to having a dedication ceremony this spring.



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

This is not an offer to sell or solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell securities only in states where authorized. Investments in CEF are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC or any other governmental agency — securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular.

Impact of The *Here We Stand* Campaign in 2018

As we enter into a new year of the *Here We Stand* (*HWS*) campaign, we do so with high expectations and great enthusiasm for what is to come in 2019. The success of the campaign in 2018, and earlier, provides a strong foundation from which to continue building.

Assuming the campaign is blessed with similar or increased levels of financial support from congregations and individuals within the Michigan District, it will allow for similar, or even increased, levels of ministry support to take place. The following provides a summary of the impact *HWS* had in 2018, and hopefully a glimpse of what can be expected in 2019.

Professional Church Worker Scholarships – In 2018 we were again able to increase scholarships by 10% over the previous year. Total scholarships given to 101 Michigan District students preparing to be Professional Church Workers was \$260,000. By comparison, in 2002/2003, total scholarships awarded by the Michigan District were \$50,000.

Innovative Missional Ministries – Mission dollars spent over the past four years have increased significantly. In 2018, approximately \$561,000 was used to support ministries like Elli's House, Luke Project 52 Clinic, Camp Restore, Hope in St. Ignace, Franklin Avenue Mission, Acts 2 Enterprise, and others.

Michigan District Endowment Fund – The Endowment Fund continues to grow as a result of the \$621,000 in cash given to date for the fund through the *HWS* campaign. A significant amount of these dollars to Endowment were given in 2018. As the Endowment continues to grow, more funding each year is given to the Michigan District from the interest growth of the fund, which allows even more ministry support to occur.

International Ministries – The *HWS* campaign is essential to the Michigan District's support of International Ministries. This is because no funding comes from District-budgeted dollars for this purpose. In other words, the *HWS* campaign supports this work 100%. To date, the campaign has provided \$725,000 in support of International Ministries which include St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church and Orphanage in South Africa, LCMS Missionary support to nine missionaries, the Hmong Catechism Project, and MOST ministries. Continued disbursements are planned in 2018 and are dependent on new International funding being received.

HWS has made a major impact already in a variety

by Ray Zavada



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

Franklin Avenue Mission soccer players pose for a quick picture during the 2018 A2E Summer Sports Camp in Flint.

of areas. Our prayer is that the campaign will continue to grow in 2019 and beyond, allowing an even greater impact to take place. Please join us in allowing this to happen.

For more information about *Here We Stand* visit herewestand.michigandistrict.org.

To make a gift, you can do so online on the website, mail in your gift to the Michigan District, LCMS, 3773 Geddes Rd, Ann Arbor MI 48105, or by calling Linda Ekong at 734.213.4265.



Here We Stand

Campaign Goal: **\$10 million**

Campaign Progress: **\$5.79 million**
(as of January 11, 2019)

Participating Congregations: **144**

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

Share the GOSPEL with NASCAR Fans

Michigan International Speedway

Sunrise Worship Service Sunday, June 9, 2019 at 10 a.m.

Saturday Race at 1 p.m. • Sunday Race at 2 p.m.

Early Bird Discount Ticket Packages include:

Sunday Only Ticket	\$50
Weekend Ticket w/o Camping	\$85
Weekend Ticket w/ Camping	\$202

\$5 of each ticket to benefit *Here We Stand*

**Contact Josh Belt at 517.592.1226 or jbelt@mispeedway.com
to purchase tickets today!**



LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LLL Recognizes Loesel and LHM Sunday

The Michigan District of the Lutheran Laymen's League has recognized Bob Loesel of St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth for his four years as president of the Saginaw Valley LLL Zone. He has also served the Lord faithfully as a member of St. Lorenz and its LLL ambassador.

Bob has also been a facilitator for LLL conventions, rallies, and conferences at St. Lorenz. He continues to be active in Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM).

LHM Sunday is a great way for congregations nationwide to become more involved with global outreach efforts. LHM wants to work with people in the pews to bring the Good News of the Gospel to everyone who hasn't heard. Hosting an LHM Sunday is a great way to make this happen.

St. Lorenz and other churches will be celebrating LHM Sunday in February. It can be celebrated by congregations on any Sunday they wish to designate.

Based on the model of past LHM Sundays, LHM provides free promotional materials to share with your congregation about how LHM seeks to share the Gospel



Bob Loesel of St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth, gives a report on the Saginaw Valley LLL Zone.

through its new initiative, SENT. More than just an initiative, SENT encapsulates what it means to really live out our mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church*.

LHM Sunday materials include a sermon outline, bulletin inserts, bulletin blurbs, videos, and slides. Simply call the LHM response center at 800.876.9880, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (CST), to request an LHM Sunday kit.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

For Valentine's Day, send in a mites donation in honor or in memory of a loved one. The grant recipients on both the State and National level will Thank You!

If there isn't an LWML Society at your church, please send your donations directly to the LWML. Check out the web site: <https://lwmlmichigan.org/>



News and Events

Walk on Water Winter Fest

The *Walk on Water Winter Fest* is a family Christian Concert sponsored by the youth group of Our Savior, Chelsea. This year the talented Austin French will be the headline artist. Opening for Austin will be the local youth groups silently battling it out for top dog in the Walk on Water Lip Sync Battle. Youth groups interested in participating in the lip sync, please contact Paul Hedding at phedding@heddingaerospace.com. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. on February 9, 2019. Cost is \$15/adult, \$10/student, and free for ages 5 and under. Purchase tickets at [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) (search Walk on Water Winter Fest).

Helping Hands

Helping Hands is Community, Flat Rock's main way of reaching out to its neighborhoods. Helping Hands serves primarily as a food pantry, but also connects Flat Rock residents to services they need. They also conduct a few special drives throughout the year such as Christmas presents, Christmas dinner, and Thanksgiving turkeys. Helping Hands is open every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and, because of the great need in the area, is only available to Flat Rock residents.

This past Thanksgiving Eve, the congregation of Community, Flat Rock "left the building" and met at a local grocery store to buy nonperishable food items. Afterward, they returned to church for a brief service, when purchases were offered to the Lord. The food items stocked the shelves in the food pantry that feeds hundreds of families each month.

After the shelves were stocked, Community congregation members picked up groceries from its sister church, St. Paul, Trenton. The Helping Hands Food Pantry shelves were so full that no one went hungry during the holidays. More photos can be found at facebook.com/clcflatrock.



Heads, Hands and Feet

Trinity, Saint Joseph's "Heads, Hands, and Feet" project blessed over 100 individuals with a hat, scarf, gloves or mittens, and socks. During the month of December, these items were collected by Trinity Lutheran Church, School and Early Childhood Center, the Saint Joseph community and local Thrivent Chapter. Trinity's Senior High Youth assembled gift bags with items and tagged them for man, woman, boy, or girl. The bags were then distributed to guests at Trinity's monthly Community Dinner where they were served a warm, delicious pork tenderloin meal and then were blessed with a gift to help keep them warm through the winter. To God be the glory!!



Trinity's High School youth assembled over 100 gift bags filled with hats, scarves, gloves, and socks.



NewLife Community, Swartz Creek welcomed 12 new members in December.

Daughter and Mother Organize Flood Bucket Assembly

Immanuel, Frankentrost and St. Luke, Harrison joined hearts and hands to assemble 250 "Flood Buckets" to assist with LCMS Disaster Relief efforts.

Organizers Jennie Smith of Immanuel and Janis Schaedig of St. Luke brought together adults and school children to assemble the buckets, which contained a variety of purchased and donated cleaning supplies and disinfectants that will be used to aid victims affected by floods, hurricanes, fire, and other natural disasters.

Immanuel and St. Luke congregations offer sincere thanks to Harrison Do It Center, Vassar Do It Center, Sam's Club, Meijer Mt. Pleasant, Thrivent Financial, Home Depot Mt. Pleasant, and others that donated items



or aided by supplying funds.

The disaster relief buckets will be stored in a warehouse associated with Orphan Grain Train in Sebewaing, Mich. until the time they are needed by communities anywhere in the United States.

Flood buckets are an LCMS ongoing project that assists those in need by reaching out in Christian love. For more information, visit michigandistrict.org and search for Disaster Relief Ministry.

Season of Hope

Proclaim to the world that the hope of Christ makes a new season possible: a Season of Hope. Lutheran World Relief has an abundance of resources to show your congregation the impact they can make in the lives of poor and struggling families around the world. Invigorate your congregation for global good with: weekly devotionals by Lutherans in the U.S. and LWR staff; Palm Sunday bulletin insert and children's activity sheet; Season of Hope Homily Series centered on Matthew 25:34–36. For more information, visit lwr.org/lent and journey through this Lenten season with Lutheran World Relief.



Dedication of New Recreation Facility

Members of the Lutheran High School North class of 2003 and dear friends of Michael Stomps II gathered for the dedication of the Stomps Center, a new, regulation-size recreation facility that has been built to be used by Immanuel, Macomb and the community.



Special Recognition

Neuendorf Ordained

On December 9, Rev. James Nuendorf, pictured center front row, was ordained into the Holy Ministry by his father, Rev. Donald Nuendorf, at St. Paul, Ann Arbor. James and his wife, Deaconess Christel Neuendorf, serve the Lord as LCMS missionaries in Puerto Rico. Both have served as missionaries in this region since 2008, based in Panama and then in the Dominican Republic. James serves as a church planter and pastor in the city of Ponce, Puerto Rico.



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

Rahn, Rahn Recognized for 25 Years' Service

Rev. Robert Rahn and Mr. Jeffrey Rahn were recently recognized for their 25 years of service to the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF), an LCMS recognized service organization located in Macomb, Mich. Rev. Robert Rahn founded the mission in 1992 and continues to work in church relations for LHF; his son, Jeffrey, is assistant executive director. Today, LHF is at work in more than 100 languages, translating and publishing the books of the Lutheran faith for people in 80 countries.



LHF Executive Director Rev. Dr. Matthew Heise (left) presents awards to Rev. Robert Rahn, LHF founder, and Jeffrey Rahn, LHF assistant executive director, for their 25 years of service to the mission.

CEF Variable Rate Notes: *A Conservative Investment Opportunity*

Allows You to Take Advantage of Rising Rates!

- \$500 minimum investment, with additional investments allowed (\$100 minimum)
- Additional investments do not impact the maturity date
- Terms of 1, 2 ½ or 5 years — Rates adjusted quarterly
- Take advantage of potentially higher rates over life of note

To learn more about Variable Rate Notes, or any of the Church Extension Fund products, call us at 1-800-242-3944

And remember, when you invest with the Church Extension Fund your money helps congregations throughout Michigan meet their worship and service needs!



Church Extension Fund

A Christian Connection to All Generations

Office: 800-242-3944

Interest rates anytime:

800-232-7313

www.mi-cef.org



The information provided here is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular. CEF investments are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC, or any other governmental agency.

Bartimaeus continued from page 3

the crowd and kept crying out all the more, ***“Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** He didn’t care what the crowd said. He didn’t care what the crowd thought. He defied the crowd and called out to Jesus anyway.

Friends, I want you to know that there were some risks involved in this (as was pointed out on our recent trip there):

- First of all, Bartimaeus was a beggar. The people around him were the ones he begged from. If he antagonized them, they might decide not to give him anything ... ever again.
- Secondly, what if Jesus had ignored him? What if he had just walked by without acknowledging his presence? Wouldn’t Bartimaeus have looked foolish? “See! I told you so! You’re just a beggar! Why would Jesus pay attention to you?” the crowd might have taunted.

Bartimaeus decided it was worth the risk. It didn’t matter if people stopped caring for him, or if he looked foolish and became the object of further ridicule; he wasn’t about to let Jesus walk by without at least trying to get His attention. His attitude (faith) was, “Maybe you can stand there and let the Healer, the King of Kings, pass you by, but I’m not

about to! I want to experience the touch of God in my life. This is my chance. I’m not letting it get away.”

When you ask anything of God, you sometimes have to defy those around and ask anyway. They’ll say things to try to put you in your place. Things like, “What gives you the right to think God will bless you? There are sick people everywhere, what gives you the right to think God will heal you? This world is in turmoil, what gives you the right to think God is concerned with your measly problems—some of which are ‘self-inflicted’?”

Friends, God loves to hear and answer the prayers of His people according to His good and gracious will. Sales people have the right to ask God to help them do well. Teachers have the right to ask God to help them teach effectively. Everyone has the right to ask God to help them in their daily lives. Yes, the world is in turmoil and



©UNO - The Gospel for the Visual Age/Lightstock, LLC

there are many serious global issues to contend with, yet the God we serve is concerned with each and every one of us—even a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road.

If you want to experience God’s power in your life, you’ll have to defy the critics and the skeptics and ask anyway ... even if it puts you at risk of looking foolish. It’s that kind of bold defiance that demonstrates faith.

The third lesson I learned in this story is ...

Ask Specifically

When Jesus heard Bartimaeus cry out, He stopped and asked him directly,

“What do you want me to do for you?” (v. 51).

Bartimaeus didn’t hesitate. He just said, ***“Rabbi (Teacher), let me recover my sight!” (v. 51)*** ***“I want to see.”***

And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well” (v. 52).

There are two things I want you to notice about this exchange.

First, Bartimaeus knew exactly what he wanted. Jesus said, ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** and Bartimaeus said, ***“I want to see.”*** His request was specific. He wasn’t unsure in the least. He didn’t say, “Um ... I want to be helped. I want to get better. I want you to bless me.” Not that those “general” prayers are bad. Maybe that’s

all you can utter, pray, or plead in a moment of unquestionable hurt or uncertainty.

But the Scriptures tell us: ***“You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2).***

Bartimaeus said exactly what he wanted: “Lord, I want to see.” He was specific, as were so many others in the Bible who sought requests of our Lord.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the act of asking *is* a demonstration of faith. God invites us to pray and he loves to answer prayer. Prayer *is* a faith-filled, immediate, often cognoscente connection to the living God. Friends, I believe it’s possible to say that God cannot answer a prayer that we aren’t willing to make. He cannot give what you do not ask for. If you want something from God, you have to ask specifically for it. If you will, it does no good to ride in back of the plane all your life and hope that the flight attendant will pick you out of the crowd and invite you to sit in first class. I doubt that will ever

*God loves to hear and answer the
prayers of His people according
to His good and gracious will.*

happen. You have to ask, and you need to be specific.

What I share next is not a caveat for what I wrote above. It is not a cover-up for what appears to be unanswered prayer. It is truth from the inspired Scriptures and from a loving God:

- Because God is all-powerful (omnipotent), he is able to do anything for us;
- Because God is all-knowing (omniscient) and full of wisdom, God knows what's best for us;
- Because God is all-loving, He will do what's best for us according to His will in His response/answer for Jesus' sake. Paul's inspired words in Romans 8 come to mind: "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*" (*Romans 8:31, 32*).

If you want to be on the receiving end of God's blessing in your life (which by grace you already are), you must have the faith to ask specifically for whatever it is you want. "What if I'm asking for something that's against His will?" you might ask. Don't worry. He'll let you know. But don't make the mistake of trying to edit in advance what God is willing to do for you. Ask specifically.

This leads me to the second thing I want you to notice ...

Bartimaeus asked for it **all**. Recognize that Who we pray to is the generous God of ALL grace, mercy, and love! "**God so loved the world that He gave ...**" (*John 3:16*). Bartimaeus could have asked for a few coins and Jesus probably would have given them to him. He could have asked for some food and Jesus probably would have given him that as well. But Bartimaeus had the faith to ask for the impossible: he asked to be able to see. And Bartimaeus got what he asked for.

Bartimaeus wasn't afraid to ask for everything. He wasn't content just to say, "Lord give me a cabin in glory land" (as David Houston, Charley Pride, and Hank Williams sing). He said, "I want a mansion in heaven; I want the impossible."

The act of "asking" demonstrates your faith. I once heard it said that our grace-given (*Ephesians 2:8–10*), saving, child-like, "focused" faith is often revealed in how specific and 'big' our prayers are. Do we have the faith to ask for something big? Do we have the faith to ask for it all? Do we have the faith to ask for the impossible?

Conclusion

Just like Jesus spoke to Bartimaeus on the Jericho Road more than 2000 years ago, he's standing before

you today and asking ... "*What do you want me to do for you?*" (*Matthew 21:22*). What is your answer? What are you willing to ask for? Are you willing to ask and keep on asking? Are you willing to ask even if it puts you at risk of looking foolish? Are you willing to ask for the impossible? When you ask God for anything at all, you demonstrate your faith. God-given faith continues to respond to, and grows through, the means of grace and the many encouragements and invitations to pray from God in His Word.

Don't be afraid to be like Bartimaeus. Don't hesitate to ask God immediately, and keep on asking. Don't give a thought to what the crowd may think or say. Defy the crowd and ask anyway. And don't forget to ask specifically for what you want, even if it seems impossible. That's the kind of faith God rewards.

I love the way this account ends: "**And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road**" (*v. 52*). You see, the real benefit Bartimaeus received that day was that he got to follow Jesus. He witnessed Him performing miracles and touching people's lives. He heard Him teach the crowds who surrounded Him. Jesus performed the impossible for Bartimaeus, and Bartimaeus responded to such grace with greater love and devotion than he had ever known.

Our God wants to make it possible for you to be a more devoted follower of Christ. Don't be afraid to ask, to pray to an ever present, all-powerful, completely loving God. █

In His Name,



Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier
President, The Michigan District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

DuBois, David (East China) to SMP Colloquy Immanuel, St. Clair
Frusti, James (Canton) to SMP Colloquy St. Paul, Northville
Gawura, Mark (Charlotte) to SMP Colloquy First Lutheran, Charlotte
Kollek, Paul (Byron) to SMP Colloquy Hope, Linden
Koppel, Alexander (Bud) (Norton Shores) to General Colloquy Our
Redeemer, Muskegon
Lyvere, Gary (Hemlock) to SMP Colloquy Our Savior, Midland
Moore, Jeffery IIM (Westland) to Faith, Topeka, KS
Nieman, Ronald (Dryden) to General Colloquy St. Mark, Flint

Change of Status

Bartzsch, Thomas (Rockford) to Emeritus
Lunneberg, Allen (Waterford) to Emeritus
Wilson, Richard (Minden City) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Bartzsch, Thomas (Rockford) to Mid-South District

Transferred Into District

Greunke, Martin (NE) to Emeritus
Neuendorf, James (Missouri District) as LCMS Board for
International Mission

Called Home

Cantele, John

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Carter, Autumn (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Trinity, Fenton
Britton, Joshua (St. Matthew, Grand Rapids) to Trinity, Utica
Lucas, Krista (Candidate) to Trinity, Traverse City
Nelson, David (St. Paul, Westlake, OH) to St. Luke, Ann Arbor

Change of Status

Johnson, Rebecca (St. Paul's, Hillsdale) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Brandimore, Layna (Candidate) to Indiana District
Johnson, Rebecca (Candidate) to North Wisconsin District

Transferred Into District

Baumann, Russell (Iowa District West) to St. James, Montague
Kayser, Doris (Eastern District) as Candidate

Called Home

Glotzhofer, Alyce

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



The Michigan District logo features a stylized cross and the text "Michigan District The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod". Below the logo is a large, bold, serif font banner that reads "GET EQUIPPED". Underneath the banner, in a smaller sans-serif font, is the text "FOR EFFECTIVE GOSPEL MINISTRY". At the bottom of the banner, there is a list of links: "Start A Ministry", "Join A Ministry", "Events", "Ministry Finder", "Resources", "Blog", "Calls & Vacancies", and "Stories & Highlights". Below the banner, the text "Visit us today at" is followed by the website address "michigandistrict.org".

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

- 2 Be Constant in Prayer
Our Savior, Lansing
14–15 Principals' Snow Tire Conference
Crowne Plaza West, Lansing
18 Presidents' Day
25–27 DCE/DFL Conference
Drury Inn, Grand Rapids

MARCH

- 2–3 State Basketball Tournament
St. Paul, Ann Arbor and CUAA
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
7–9 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 Mothers' Day
13–14 West Pastors' Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton, Grand Rapids
15–16 Intentional Interim Ministry Continuing Educ.
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
CUAA, Black Box
5/31–6/2 Jr. High Gathering
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth

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