

December 2019

michigan

IN TOUCH

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

HEALTHY WORKERS

Family Traditions by Ashleigh Leeds

When I was young, my family had a Christmas tradition that we would do every year after decorating the Christmas tree. We would begin decorating sometime after dinner, which, in Michigan winters, always meant it was already long dark out when we began. With Nat King Cole or other classic Christmas albums playing, we would put the lights on first (okay, my mom would put the lights on, my dad stood nearby helping her and testing and untangling lights, and my brother and I would look through storage bins of Christmas decora-

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tions we hadn't seen in a year, as if they were long lost treasures). Next came the perfectly placed ornaments, and our family's beautifully hand crafted angel to top the tree. My mom would add the finishing touches of ribbons and bows, while my brother and I followed in tow, in wonder at its perfection. Once the tree was decorated, every year, we would turn off all of the lights, sit together on the couch, and sing "Silent Night" together by the still, soft light of only the Christmas tree. The magic of Christmas, combined with the stillness of a cold winter night, soft light of the Christmas tree, family togetherness, and tradition made these such perfect moments, and now, perfect memories.

Christmas as an adult often looks much different than it does through the eyes of a child. Through the hustle and bustle of this time of year, many more elements seem to be added into the mix. With the chaos of the season, stress of work, holiday travel schedules, and traditions to fulfill, sometimes this time of year looks a lot more overwhelming than "calm and bright." It is difficult to find those moments of calm, and to slow down and focus. At times, even our traditions, those that are used to celebrate the season, add stress and busyness to our overpacked schedules. The season becomes a list of tasks: make cookies, buy and wrap presents, decorate the house, go see Santa, attend all the parties. Trying to fit it all in feels like a feat that can only be accomplished by a miracle.

Sometimes, though, our traditions can help us to slow down and remember what it is to simply enjoy the wait of Advent and the joy of Christmastime. Though traditions may end, change, or transition, our remembrance of them can still serve to connect us to Christmases past. While my family does not still uphold the "Silent Night" tradition, in the midst of my chaotic Christmastime, I still find myself enamored by the light of a Christmas tree, and calmed by the silence of winter and that of the soft, ambient light of the tree. I covet the times in the early morning or late evening darkness, when I can sit in silence in my apartment, by only the

light of the Christmas tree, and reconnect with God, around whom all of life, and this season particularly, centers.

If our traditions are created with intentionality, to focus on and worship the Christ child or to exemplify family togetherness, then the season will be celebrated with those two things at the heart. As families age and children grow into adults, those traditions, while possibly no longer maintained, may serve as a reminder of what this season is all about: taking the time to slow down, remember the birth of our Savior, and give the gift of presence to our loved ones around us. Amidst the chaos of our lists and shopping, we need to remember to slow down, be present with our families, and focus on the Christ Child who was born to be our Savior. Sometimes, being present—not just physically there, with minds focused on our next task and preparation, but truly present with our children, spouses, and families, and taking time to be in quiet moments with them—is all we need in order to see the meaning of the season. Traditions that become regular habits of the season serve as a perfect way to build that into our seasons.

May our traditions be created with intentionality, and help us to stop and focus this season. Whether it's family devotions around an advent wreath every day after a family dinner, singing carols in the living room by the tree lights, or simply making cookies together as a family, I pray your advent and Christmas season traditions bring your closer together as a family, and shine the light of Jesus to everyone in your family and everyone you encounter this season.

Many blessings to you this Christmas season and always. ■

Ashleigh Leeds has been working in congregational ministry as a DFLM for seven years. She currently serves as the Operations Manager at Concordia Center for the Family. She has a passion for teaching the Gospel, writing, photography, and painting.

... we need to remember to *slow down, be present* with our families, and *focus* on the Christ Child who was born to be our Savior.



Bethel's *Blue Christmas* by Richard Salzwedel

While the holiday season is “supposed” to be happy and jolly, often it is not because we are missing someone dear to us. The first Christmas after a loved one has passed away is very difficult. It is especially hard to go to a Christmas service at your church without that loved one sitting next to you.

Bethel, Grandville designed a service to help people as they struggle through the holidays due to the loss of a loved one or just not being able to feel that “holiday joy.”

The Blue Christmas service was promoted in many ways, including Facebook, our church’s website, posters in local restaurants, other churches sending out emails to their members, funeral homes publicizing through their grief counselors and websites, and posters for the police, fire, and public works departments. In addition, Bethel worked with the Widowed Persons Service of Grand Rapids to promote the service among their members.

The service was put together by Rev. Robert Gerke, who has had extensive training in working with grieving people. Bethel had never tried anything like this before, so the question was, could a small church pull this off and bring comfort to grieving people during difficult times?

There were questions that needed to be answered, including: would anyone even come to this type of service and, if they did come, would the service be comforting to them?

On December 19, 2018 Bethel’s first Blue Christmas was held. The church had been decorated for Christmas and organ and piano music filled the air. The stage was set, but the questions still needed to be answered.

Twenty-seven people came to the service, of which five had never been to Bethel before. The service lasted about an hour. No offering was taken. Comfort was in large supply, with Pastor staying at the altar afterwards for anyone who

wanted a special private prayer of comfort. A reception was held after the service.

Some remarkable things happened at that service. One young lady in her early 20s started crying during the service and it touched the heart of one of the people that came to the service so much that she prayed for that young lady.

The most unbelievable event occurred between two non-members of our congregation. One widow had flown in from Virginia and was attending the service with her daughter and her family. Another widow had flown to Grand Rapids from Illinois to be with her son over the holiday. They sat across the aisle from each other, unaware of each other. As the service went on, one of them recognized the other. It turned out that the younger one had been the flower girl at the other’s wedding 60 years ago. Coincidence or did God put these two people together so unexpectedly?

In talking to the five people that had never been to Bethel before, they felt the service was comforting to them. Amanda Oppenhuizen, the executive director of Widowed Persons Service, attended to see what the service was like, and felt that this was a wonderful service that would be a great help to her members. She indicated a willingness to strongly promote it next time.

Bethel did get answers to our two main questions: people *will* come to this type of service, and it *was* comforting to the ones who joined us. Bethel’s Blue Christmas service will take place again this year, on Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. Join us! ■

Richard Salzwedel is the President of Grand General Insurance Agency. He has served in many positions at various Lutheran churches and is presently the Chairman of Bethel, Grandville.

Our Prodigals and the Holidays

by Scott Mueller

In 2011, research from the Barna Group revealed that 59% of young adults with a church background had dropped out of church at some point during their 20s—some for good. In September 2019 (Just eight years later), a Barna Group report revealed findings on young adults (18-29) showing the problem is not getting any better. The percentage of dropouts has increased to 64%. Perhaps your own church numbers echo these findings.

Sadly, most of us now have individuals in our lives who have strayed away from the church and maybe even faith in Jesus Christ altogether. Parents whose children have strayed often find themselves feeling isolated and having to carry the burden on their own. The feelings of guilt and shame can become overwhelming as they wonder what they did wrong, could have done better, or failed to do. Church leaders may experience similar feelings as they wrestle with how to reach the prodigals as well as minister to their families. If friends and family members are even aware of the situation, they may feel heavy-hearted and struggle with what to say or how to help.

This issue is rarely, if ever, discussed in most churches; people somehow don't appear comfortable talking about it. Some parents may speak personally with their pastor or with family or friends, but most keep it to themselves because of guilt or shame. When guilt and shame are not addressed, parents can get so overcome by these feelings that it wears on them and drains their life of the Lord's joy. Some might withdraw from church involvement or even leave the church themselves. When parents are not living their life free from guilt, adult children lose out on the opportunity to experience the Christian witness of their parents. This situation can be especially hard on church workers or leaders and their families since they often feel the expectation to have a perfect family.

Paula Isakson, founder of Faith Family Reunion, knows this situation all too well. She writes, *"The heart of this project starts from my experience of growing up in a loving Christian home, falling away from faith in Jesus Christ and then returning again. During the time I fell away from my faith, my parents*

and siblings went through a tough time with me and I with them. My parents questioned how they brought me up, wondering if they had done enough and feeling like they had failed."

Faith Family Reunion

Upon returning to the faith, Paula and her father (the now departed Dr. Jakob K. Heckert, retired LCMS pastor) started Faith Family Reunion and co-wrote curriculum that addresses this prodigal matter head on. Paula writes, *"I wanted to do more than just give encouragement to parents individually. I wanted to address the situation more fully and connect parents with other parents/families. There is something to be said about knowing you are not alone in a situation, that there are others just like you, who are going through the same thing. With the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, Faith Family Reunion was born. My hope with Faith Family Reunion is to address the issue of children leaving the faith and the church, giving parents a network of other parents/families to reach out to—people who are going through the same thing—sharing testimonies of families that have been reunited in faith, and offering encouragement, inspiration, and hope to parents/families (and the church leaders who minister to them)."*

The holidays can provide a wonderful opportunity to touch the lives of our prodigals and their families. We pray you will join us to begin this important conversation.

If you have a prodigal in your life or minister to those who do, consider scheduling a workshop. For more information on Faith Family Reunion please visit faithfamilyreunion.com. ■

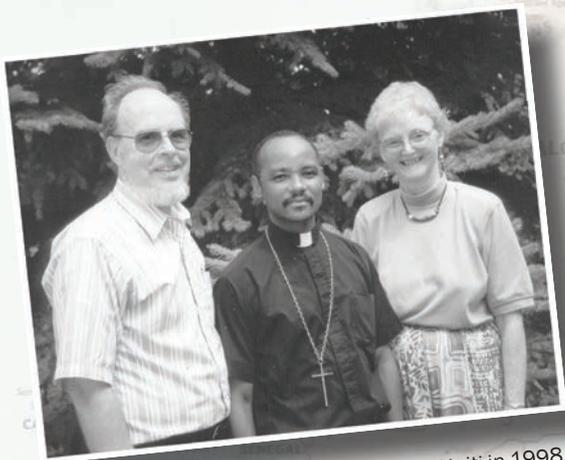
Scott Mueller has served for over 20 years in the LCMS as a Director of Christian Education (DCE). He currently serves at St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth as Director of Discipleship Ministries and is also a Congregational Resource Consultant with Faith Family Reunion.

There is something to be said about knowing you are *not alone* in a situation, that there are others just like you, who are *going through the same thing*.



MOST Ministries *Celebrates* Thirty Years

by Bethel Larsen



Trip to Haiti in 1998.

When Gayle and Don Sommerfeld joined a construction team to Haiti in 1989, little did they know that their first steps in short-term missions would lead them to found a mission organization that has impacted over 230,000 lives in 50 countries—and counting. Finding no niche within the LCMS for mission trips of one to three weeks, the Sommerfelds built on their experience with another organization to lay the foundations of MOST Ministries—Mission Opportunities Short Term—now a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS that has just marked its thirtieth anniversary. Progressive growth, from its humble beginnings in the Sommerfeld home, has led to the establishment of its own ministry center in Ann Arbor, Mich. where a staff of seven and a rotating volunteer corps of approximately 100 individuals provide support services.

In the past 30 years, MOST has had much to celebrate. Operating on a “field-driven” model, MOST sends teams to serve through specific projects requested by churches or missionaries in the host countries. Eyeglass teams are requested most frequently; but water purification, women’s and children’s ministry, construction, sewing, ESL, and other projects facilitate connections between local churches and the needs of their surrounding populations, breaking ground for sharing the Gospel. All teams incorporate evangelism into their programs, using colorful crocheted puppets with children, bracelets with colored beads with adults, and the pictorial “Evangecube” with all ages. However, even in restricted areas where such overt outreach has been forbidden, the love of Jesus manifested through MOST teams has led to surprising openings for the host churches. MOST’s eyeglass clinics have even been replicated in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan, and a new eyeglass ministry in South Africa has been birthed under the auspices of MOST and the Michigan District, LCMS within the past year.

With 20 well-trained team leaders, thorough preparation of team members, a ministry center staff that makes travel arrangements and monitors health and safety issues, and caring follow-up, MOST is the ideal mission sender for nervous would-be missionaries, who may range in age from teens to octogenarians. The sense of security and satisfaction gained from performing well-defined acts of service leads many team members to return year

MOST sends teams to serve through specific projects requested by churches or missionaries in the host countries.

Current requests from the field show an ever-expanding geographic range of needs and possibilities, too often limited only by the availability of team members.

after year. In the process, both team members and those who send and support them have often seen that steps of faith and obedience to the Holy Spirit lead to surprising revelations of God's care and presence.

Current requests from the field show an ever-expanding geographic range of needs and possibilities, too often limited only by the availability of team members. Anyone who has ever considered short-term mission service may find out more by visiting mostministries.org. Be sure to read the profile on Gayle Sommerfeld in the Fall 2019 *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* or Gayle's memoir *Beyond Sight* (co-authored with daughter Sandi Helm and available from the author).

In commemoration of the Thirtieth Anniversary, new "sending" supporters are offered the opportunity to participate in a "30/30 Challenge" seeking 30 new giving partners who will commit to a monthly automated gift of \$30. However, new team members who manifest the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus on the field and those who undergird their service with prayer are most vitally important. To explore how you may fit into MOST Ministries as a "pray-er", sender, or goer, please visit mostministries.org.

Bethel Larsen lives in Michigan, worships at Holy Trinity, Lakeview, is on MOST Ministries' Board of Directors, and is active in LWML. A widow, she is the mother of five, a grandmother, and a great-grandmother. Her long list of interests includes reading, writing, singing, exploring nature, and travel, including annual short-term mission trips with MOST Ministries.



Finding a *Blessing* Amid a Brouhaha

by Ryan Tinetti

It's been an unlikely autumn in Arcadia. It all started when a neighbor issued a concern with our Church Council at Trinity Lutheran about our church's bells, which chime on the hour (between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.) and also play hymns at noon and 6 p.m. It was just a flicker of a complaint, and I thought that we'd be able to address it quickly and quietly.

Boy, was I wrong.

Arcadia is your quintessential small town. Before long the word about the neighbor's concern got out—a concern, it turned out, that was not shared by the vast majority of the community. And the next thing I knew, this little flicker became a full-on conflagration. Signs showed up in front yards, created by I-don't-know-who, saying “Save the Arcadia bells.” The local NPR station did a story. And then the NBC affiliate produced a segment, which was picked up all over the state.

I'll be honest. When this bells kerfuffle first arose I found it a little vexing. “All publicity is good publicity,” they say, but this was by no means what I was looking for—not least because I was concerned for our neighbors who lodged the complaint and suddenly found themselves as *personae non gratae* around town.

Before too long, though, I recognized a blessing amid the brouhaha.

What was the blessing? I'll put it this way. Churches will often ask themselves (or be asked), especially in seasons of transition, “If we weren't here, what would be the loss to the community? Would our neighbors miss us?” Too often congregations don't have a good answer to that question. They've lost a sense of purpose, a sense of identity.

I came to feel grateful for the bells kerfuffle, though, because members of our community started offering unsolicited input about what Trinity Lutheran means to our little village—in e-mails, phone calls, drop-ins, or conversations at the post office. *They* were coming to us and saying, “Here's what we'd miss if you weren't here.” To be sure, many comments specifically addressed the topic of the bells. But many others expanded to speak of the place of our church in the community generally.

Numerous folks, with no direct connection to our church, said things like, Trinity is the iconic center of town. Or that our presence embodies the spirit of the village. Or indeed that Trinity is “the heart of Arcadia”—

not only in a geographical sense (which is true), but in a larger symbolic sense as well.

All this got me thinking.

It's one thing to have an identity in the community as a result of your physical presence. That's a great blessing, and we ought to be grateful for it. But what would it look like for us to lean into that identity, and build upon it? To embrace the place that our neighbors already accord to us in the community, and to strive for it to be not only a *passive* designation (due to our building) but also an *active* one (due to God's work through our people and ministry)?

I thought to myself, what if Trinity Lutheran were known not only for being the heart *of* Arcadia, but also for having a heart *for* Arcadia?

I shared these thoughts at our congregational voters' meeting, at which we would decide whether or not to change the playing of the bells. Unsurprisingly, the congregation voted to keep the bells as they had been. But then the conversation immediately turned to: “*This is going to be disappointing for the neighbors who had the concern. How can we make an extra effort to show them the love of Christ?*” And straightaway a flurry of ideas came out.

And suddenly I realized that, to a large extent, this church already *has* a “heart for Arcadia.” We're a church that is welcoming to the community and that cares for its neighbors in need. For instance, this summer I brought to our church's attention a family in Arcadia with extraordinary needs. I challenged us to give generously to help, hoping we might raise a few hundred dollars to provide assistance in some tangible ways. The congregation raised nearly *six thousand dollars* in a single weekend. I about fainted when I saw the final number.

So in that moment at the voters' meeting I recognized afresh that we are in fact a church with a history and tradition of seeking to be a blessing and benefit to its home. The invitation and opportunity for our next season of ministry is therefore to embrace more wholeheartedly, and with greater intentionality, who God has already made us to be.

My point in sharing this story is to say that, apart from the commotion over the church bells, I might not even have noticed this vision of our congregation that was right under my nose. And so my encouragement for

other congregations and church leaders is simply this: pay attention to the kerfuffles that emerge in your own church and community.

Yes, they often feel like a distraction or worse. But it may be the case that, when they arise, your neighbors or parishioners are revealing their hearts—their deep-seated longings and values. And when the congregation's heart touches the heart of its people with the love of Jesus, beautiful ministry can happen.

And you might just find a blessing amid the brouhaha.

Rev. Ryan Tinetti serves as pastor at Trinity, Arcadia.

... when the congregation's heart touches the heart of its people with the love of Jesus, beautiful ministry can happen.



7 Ways Your CEF Investments Helped Lutheran Ministries Build God's Kingdom This Year



The above collage shows an image from a congregation, school, or ministry that CEF has helped in the last year. To learn more about each of the stories below check out previous editions of the 2019 Michigan In Touch.

1 With CEF, There's No "One Size Fits All"

A Lutheran ministry can apply CEF financing in so many ways. Consider St. John Lutheran Church and School in Fraser. CEF grants and loans have helped the school start a robotics team and finish a preschool playground, while continuing to offer free tuition for church members' children. In the church building, the Steiner-Reck pipe organ has been completely overhauled.

CEF funding has also helped St. John build brand new classrooms and a state-of-the-art library to allow for high quality Lutheran education to be offered in Fraser.

2 What to Do When Blessings Keep Coming

Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Monitor faced a challenge that other ministries wouldn't mind having. At a time when many

schools see declining enrollment, Trinity's numbers have kept climbing. This left them looking for ways to accommodate their growth.

For a while, Trinity got by with creative use of existing space. But patchwork solutions could work for only so long. CEF financing, combined with the congregation's pledges, enabled Trinity to build a new school wing. It added much-needed classrooms, storage space, rooms for staff, and bathrooms.

3 A Whole New Kitchen—and More

At East Ida Immanuel Lutheran Church near Monroe, the need to upgrade the 170-year-old church's kitchen had long been recognized. All at East Ida agreed: to be able to continue serving dinners for funerals and other church events, a bigger and better kitchen would be required soon.

In short time, CEF provided financing for the kitchen's remodeling. But the improvements didn't end there. As the expanded kitchen moved to a newly constructed wing, the old kitchen space was re-outfitted to create needed meeting rooms. East Ida also re-sided the church, re-did walkways, and updated landscaping.

4 When It's Better to Simply Start Fresh

The sanctuary and parsonage next door to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Milan had served them well for some 70 years, but had gradually fallen into disrepair. Refurbishment was considered, but ruled out. Updated rooms, no matter how well outfitted, would be too small for modern needs. And rebuilding would need to stick to the same footprint, since that's all the space there is.

CEF financing helped St. Paul's realize an innovative rebuilding plan.

CEF IN 2019

Our work is hard, but then, at year's end, we can look back to see we've made true progress. Your investments with Church Extension Fund matter! Lutheran ministries do so much to help build the Kingdom with CEF's support.

\$\$\$ **15.2**

MILLION

in approved loans

 **42**

TOTAL LOANS

 **18**

CONGREGATIONS

already participating in our
Investment Rebate Program

Learn more by visiting www.mi-cef.org

The new pastoral office, meeting rooms, and learning center now connect directly to the existing church structure with a beautiful bell tower in between.

5 Enhancing Educational Excellence

Valley Lutheran High School, in Saginaw, consistently ranks among the nation's top 10 Christian schools. Yet they can't rest on their laurels. To remain competitive, Valley Lutheran needs to offer the most complete and modern facilities, where students can thrive.

CEF has been proud to help. Valley Lutheran has been able to add four new science labs, expand their art and music programs, update Special Education rooms, and enhance athletic facilities—all in time for the 2019-20 school year.

6 CEF Goes to Camp

Camp Arcadia's setting on the spectacular dune-swept shores of Lake Michigan has long been an

inspirational blessing—and, in recent years, an existential threat.

A few years ago, the Lutheran-affiliated camp initiated a capital campaign to help remodel their main building while buffering the shoreline from the Great Lakes' rising waters. Then water levels rose faster than projected. Funds for a beach wall were needed immediately to bridge the gap between campaign pledges and their receipt. CEF came through with the dollars needed, so Camp Arcadia could reinforce the shore in time for their 97th season.

7 How CEF Helps Bethany Lutheran Help Others

Bethany Lutheran Church, on Detroit's east side, has applied CEF funding to help extend their community-centered ministry in non-traditional, yet exceedingly valuable ways.

Example: CEF loans have enabled Bethany Lutheran to upgrade their kitchen facilities, while also offering

kitchen access to entrepreneurial community members who provide much-needed food services to their neighbors in need. The church now has an added revenue stream. This helps them continue offering other urgently needed community services, including a food bank, employment skills, and more.



“We can count on CEF to support places where people learn about Jesus and His Gospel.”

Susan Klauser
Principal, Trinity Lutheran
School, Monitor

Correction: In last month's November Spotlight featuring Bethany Lutheran Church in Detroit, we incorrectly titled their learning center *Glory Minds*. The correct name is *Growing Minds Learning Center*.



Church Extension Fund

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Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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

Dear Friends in Christ,

In our present circumstances turmoil is rampant, anger toward and distrust of fellow man is at the boiling point, and reaching a consensus on just about any issue seems improbable. And I am not just talking about politics. These same issues are occurring in our communities, in our homes and, unfortunately, even at times in our churches.

One may ask: where then does our joy and peace come from? As people of faith, we are blessed to not only know the answer, but to have the answer in our hearts. It comes from the ONE Who never changes. It comes from Jesus, our **living hope** (1 Peter 1:3), who, *“for ... you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*

How richly blessed are we to have such an amazing, generous God of love, grace, mercy, and peace. This ever-present, unchanging God makes Himself known in the Holy Scriptures and the Sacraments, and allows His light to shine for us, in us, and through us!

Let us draw near to the newborn Savior where He is found! (Heb.10:25; James 4:8)

Through Michigan District mission and ministries, we strive to bring this same joy and peace we have in

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus ... census should be taken of the ... (This was the first census that ...)

Innovative Missional Ministries

Sharing the *Living Hope* with people in need.



Deb Ellinger and a volunteer pray with a woman in Detroit.

“God put it on my heart to help and serve women that no one else loved” (Deb Ellinger). In 2017, Deb founded **Elli’s House**, a Christ-centered 501(c)3 nonprofit serving homeless, runaway women involved in forced prostitution and human trafficking in the city of Detroit. Many of these women come from normal lives in the suburbs while others have spent their lives in foster homes or in dysfunctional families; they all find themselves in the worst possible situation. Elli’s House provides safe shelter, educational support, counseling, and medical services. They also offer a two-year plan that provides family problem solving, crisis management, and continued counseling and medical services, with family reunification as their primary goal.



A nurse at the Luke Project 52 Clinic provides a check-up for a patient in need of pre-natal care.

Jesus Christ to the many we serve who have not yet experienced His presence or who don't even minimally understand that He is with us always.

Along with our congregations, the Michigan District supports numerous Innovative Missional Ministries that serve the unchurched and under-churched in many urban and rural communities. These ministries—places like Elli's House, The Luke Project 52 Clinic, Franklin Avenue Mission, A2E Sports Camps, and other Innovative Missional Ministry efforts—respond to specific needs in their communities, meeting people where they're at in life. To learn more about these and others, visit michigandistrict.org/christmasappeal.

Dear friends, as you pray about and eventually make your annual Christmas and year-end gift-giving decisions, would you please consider a gift in support of the many Innovative Missional Ministries of the Michigan District? By supporting these vital ministries through the **Here We Stand** campaign, you will significantly help the Michigan District in its efforts to fulfill the primary objective, which is to grow Christ's Kingdom. Your gift will make a difference for today (by helping someone find a job, or be fed or clothed, or find housing, etc.), and ultimately for eternity, as this person learns of life with Jesus now and forever.

Again, I humbly ask you to prayerfully and generously help us help others as we carry out our mission to reach the lost and disciple the saved. A response card is available below or you can make a donation online at: michigandistrict.org/christmasappeal.



Children receive a nutritious meal while attending an A2E Sports Camp.

Remember, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*. May the joy and peace of His birth be with you today, tomorrow, and forever.

Together with you and the Holy Spirit endeavoring to reach the lost, disciple the saved, and let our light shine for His glory,

Rev. David P. E. Maier

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

P.S. The Michigan District Church Extension Fund will provide a 10% match to every gift received in our Annual Christmas Appeal as part of their gift-matching commitment to the **Here We Stand** campaign. Please be generous.



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 _____

My gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.

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

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LHM Resources for Church and Family

Holiday Specials

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) has produced several award-winning holiday television specials which air on stations across the U.S. and Canada and are marketed under the name *Envoy Productions*. The same holiday specials, dubbed into several languages, are broadcast on stations around the world through LHM's International Ministry Centers. Check out the broadcast guide at lhm.org/radiotv/holidayprograms.asp for animated specials such as *Little Shepherd*, *Red Boots for Christmas*, *Christmas Is*, *The City that Forgot Christmas*; and the Emmy-award-winning Christmas Drama *The Stableboy's Christmas*.

LHM Sunday

Michigan District, LCMS congregations will be celebrating Lutheran Hour Ministries Sunday on February 3, 2020. Congregations can also celebrate LHM Sunday any other weekend, at their convenience.

To order materials, please go to lhm.org/lhmsunday. Orders must be placed by the end of the day on Tuesday, January 22 to guarantee delivery for the February 3 event. For events being held after February 3, please allow a minimum of two weeks for delivery when ordering materials.

Equipping Resources

LHM offers equipping resources to help you reach out with the love and Good News of Jesus Christ in your everyday life. These online courses and webinars cover five faith-strengthening categories and use an array of multimedia elements to help you gain a hearing for the Gospel message.

LHM's podcast, *Speaking of Jesus*, airs weekly episodes of real people having real conversations about life, Jesus, and what He means to them. Subscribe on Apple and Google podcasts or listen through iHeart Radio, Spotify, Spreaker, and Amazon Alexa.

The Lutheran Hour®

LHM produces and airs radio and TV programming around the world in more than 80 languages. The Lutheran Hour® is the flagship radio program for Lutheran Hour Ministries. This 30-minute broadcast is the world's oldest continually broadcast Gospel radio program. To find stations and times selected programs air in your area, visit lhm.org/broadcastinformation.asp.



LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

What better gift to give than a Mite offering?

- Mite Grant gifts went to **New Beginnings for Children with Learning Needs** for \$25,000.
- Mite Grant gifts went to **Financial Assistance for Concordia Theological Seminary**, Fort Wayne, Food and Clothing Co-op for \$10,000.
- Mite Grant gifts went to **Lutheran Books for Missionaries Around the World** for \$15,000.
- *Mites truly are the gifts that keep on giving – throughout our state, our nation, our world!*



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

Be part of the Mission with Mites. Send your donations to Sandy Maya, 6600 Constitution Blvd. #402, Portage, MI 49024.

Visit the LWML Michigan District web site for information about what we do & much more! <https://lwmlmichigan.org/>

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

(through November 1, 2019)

\$6,201,145.92 Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$5,811,705.91 Cash received which includes \$500,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$323,567.29 Outstanding commitments (pledges)

1,399 Total Contributors
1,245 Individual Contributors
154 Congregations Contributing
42.5% % of Michigan District Congregations currently participating

\$1,250,593.40 Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$2,523,389.00 Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$ 946,457.43 Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$1,414,843.38 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



Here We Stand



LEGACY: Reclaiming A Lost Generation

Ephesians 4:1-3



Michigan District, LCMS presents

2020 Theological Conference

February 1, 2020 | Our Savior, Lansing, Mich.

Speakers:

Rev. Dr. Robert D. Newton
Rev. Dr. Dean W. Nadasdy
Mrs. Heather L. Ruesch
Rev. R. Gabe Kasper

General \$20
Student \$15

michigandistrict.org/theological20

Christmas Book Reading

After the September 29, 2019 Sunday service at Ascension, East Lansing, emeritus pastor Michael Martin held a reading of his children's Christmas storybook, *Ariel: The Curious Cat of Christmas*.



Photo courtesy of Ascension, East Lansing

Ariel relates the story of Jesus' birth through the eyes of the animals that share their home with the infant Christ child and His parents, and are the first to welcome Him into the world. Martin wrote *Ariel* as a means for families to share the story of Jesus' birth in a way that appeals to children and helps them understand what our Lord's birth and life mean to them. Martin has been an ordained minister in the LCMS for 40 years. During that time, he served parishes in both Canada and in Michigan. He also worked as a substance abuse counselor before becoming a chaplain with the Michigan Department of Corrections.

Blessing of the Quilts

On Sunday, Oct. 6, pastors and congregants of Peace, Saginaw gathered to pray over the three dozen quilts made by the Piece by Peace Quilt Club before they are shipped all over the globe via Lutheran World Relief.



Rev. Matthew Hauser (l) and Rev. Erik Schmidt (r) blessing the quilts made by the Piece by Peace Quilt Club.

Photo courtesy of Peace, Saginaw

CLW Announces Scholarship Recipients

The Council of Lutheran Women (CLW), at its fall general meeting, announced the recipients of its scholarships for students preparing for careers in the Lutheran Church in the 2019-2020 academic year. Scholarships have been awarded to 13 seminarians, one deaconess student, and two Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA) students. The CLW fall meeting was hosted by St. Peter Lutheran Church in Macomb, Mich.

The CUAA scholarship recipients, Paige Rebber and Hannah Biermann, were special guests and received their scholarships at the meeting. They were accompanied by Dr. Sandra Harris, Campus Dean of the CUAA School of Education, and Joshua Kittleman, Department Chair of Family Life.

Photo courtesy of CLW



From left: Joshua Kittleman, CUAA Department Chair of Family Life; Paige Rebber, recipient of the Rev. John C. Streit Memorial Scholarship; Hannah Biermann, recipient of the Leona B. Meyer Memorial Scholarship; Dr. Sandra Harris, Campus Dean of the CUAA School of Education; and CLW President Lucie Witte

New Members at Bethel, Howard City



Photo courtesy of Bethel, Howard City

Service Sunday

On Sunday, October 13, 2019 volunteers from five congregations put together 70 flood relief buckets and 150 hygiene kits for L.E.R.T. Downriver churches participating were Christ the King, Southgate; Trinity, Wyandotte; St. Paul, Trenton; Connection, Brownstown, and Calvary, Lincoln Park.



Photo courtesy of Christ the King, Southgate

Sixteen Baptisms in One Day

October 27, 2019 was a special day for East Bethlehem, Detroit as they witnessed the Baptism of sixteen children.

Up until a few years ago, East Bethlehem struggled attracting any kids at all. The congregation partnered with Gifts for All God's Children (GFAGC) and started a tutoring program called Connecting Kids to Christ (CKC). From September to May, kids come to CKC twice a week for 75 minutes of one-on-one instruction. Together, students and volunteer tutors pray and study the Word, building a bond and helping students grow in wisdom and understanding.

Pastor Asaph James was thrilled to be celebrating the Baptisms on Reformation Sunday (observed). He commented: "All glory to God. It's all I can say."

After the service, the congregation had a pizza and cake party, and in the afternoon they hosted a Trunk or Treat event.

Watch a video about this day at michigandistrict.org/eastbethlehembaptisms.



Photo by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS

Sr. High Youth Gathering – Anchored in Hope

Our communities, schools, and churches are filled with kids who are searching for HOPE and desperately craving for an anchor in this stressed out, anxiety-stricken culture. Under the theme Anchored in Hope (Romans 5:1–8), the youth will be learning



more about the suffering we experience, how we can persevere, how to build character, and how to rely on the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. At the gathering, their days will be filled with Bible studies, large group gatherings, servant event opportunities, fellowship, concerts, comedy, exploring Mackinac Island, eating fudge, and so much more. Space is limited, so register soon!

The event will take place June 28–July 1, 2020 at Mission Point Resort on Mackinac Island. Cost is \$389/person (includes gathering, lodging, meals, and a t-shirt). Visit michigandistrict.org/srhigh20 for more information.

School Loan Repayment Assistance for Church Workers

The Michigan District, LCMS has made \$40,000 available for school loan repayment assistance through MinistryFOCUS. This organization's purpose is to help church workers focus more on ministry and less on finances. Individuals who currently serve as rostered church workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and carry at least \$20,000 in educational loans are eligible. The deadline to apply is December 31, 2019. To download the 2020 Grant Application, visit ministryfocus.org.

Michigan District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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The Luke Project 52 Clinic Grows

The Luke Project 52 Clinic, a New Start ministry of the Michigan District, has been providing free prenatal care (including pregnancy testing, lab work, and ultrasounds) and infant care to underserved women and babies in Detroit since 2016/2017. The clinic has had steady increases in the number of patients served. As of August 31, 2019, 414 patients have been seen (an increase of 297 since 2017); 61 babies have been born (40 more than in 2017), and 751 appointments were held—an increase of 324 since 2017. The clinic projects a total of 1,151 appointments by this year’s end.

The Clinic now has a volunteer fleet manager and driver who will be driving the mobile medical clinic to and from clinic at Family of God, Detroit. He will also drive the minibus to transport patients, besides helping set-up and tear down clinic. In between clinic days, he will be responsible for seeing that the mobile units are maintained.

The Luke Project 52 Clinic has also received a \$15,000 grant for general operating expenses from Blue Cross

Blue Shield of Michigan.

Garrison and his team are currently discussing the possibility of a major grant to deploy a “Mobile Antenatal Testing Pilot Project” that will take weekly testing to patients where they live rather than requiring them to overcome the many obstacles of getting to the hospital for these needed tests. The mobile units will be staffed by a physician, experienced labor and delivery nurse, driver/security person, and a social work/chaplain. If the funding is sufficient, these will be paid positions. Please remember this effort in your prayers.

If you would like to volunteer with The Luke Project 52 Clinic, visit michigandistrict.org/joinaministry.



Photo courtesy of The Luke Project 52 Clinic

Special Recognition

Rev. Matthew Peters Receives Fr. Zwiers Award

Rev. Matthew Peters, Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church and Zion Lutheran Preschool in Petoskey, Mich., has been named one of four recipients of the 2019 Fr. John B. Zwiers Award by the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools (MANS) Board of Trustees.

Rev. Peters was nominated for the award by Mr. Travis Grulke, Assistant to the President - Superintendent of Schools, Michigan District, LCMS in Ann Arbor, Mich.

According to Grulke, “Pastor Peters is a strong advocate for Christian education and a great support for school ministry. The word ‘champion’ sums up how Pastor recognizes what a blessing it is to be able to share the love of Christ with His little ones. We need more gifted pastors to walk alongside our early childhood centers as they work together in serving the families and students on a daily basis.” According to the preschool director, “Pastor visits weekly to tell a Bible story and sing songs with the students. He will often stay and play with them afterward, as well. The students love spending time with Pastor!”

Fr. John B. Zwiers was a founding member of MANS and served faithfully on the MANS Board of Trustees from 1972 until his death in 2004.

“Recognizing the critical importance that a pastor plays in successful faith-based education, the MANS Board instituted the Fr. Zwiers award to recognize members of the clergy with a strong history of support for faith-based schools. These individuals are able to articulate the importance of

a faith-based education, have ongoing connections to the school community, parents, teachers, and students, and

demonstrate support in leading the school community,” said MANS Executive Director Brian D. Broderick.

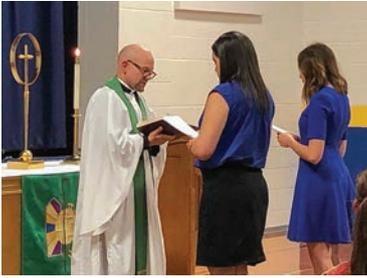
Together with Rev. Peters, three others were also recognized with the Fr. Zwiers award at the opening ceremony of the MANS Administrators’ Conference at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa in Acme, Mich. on October 16, 2019. These individuals are: Fr. James Chelich, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School, Grand Rapids; Msgr. Mike Hrydziuszko, Holy Family Regional School and St. Andrew Church, Rochester Hills; and R.H. “Bear” Berends, Director Emeritus, All Belong Center for Inclusive Education (formerly CLC Network), Grand Rapids, Mich.

MANS represents over 400 faith-based schools across the State of Michigan, including Catholic schools within the seven dioceses of Michigan, the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Schools, Michigan Region of Christian Schools International, and the Association of Christian Schools International.



Photo courtesy of MANS

Our Savior, Grand Rapids' New Principal and Teachers



On Sunday, August 25, 2019 Mrs. Kara Harbaugh and Mrs. Avreil Markham were installed at Our Savior Lutheran School in Grand Rapids during the school year's Opening Service. Mrs. Harbaugh

has been called to serve as principal and first and second grade teacher. Harbaugh also attended Our Savior Lutheran School as an elementary school student. She holds her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Grand Valley State University and Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Michigan State University. Mrs. Markham will teach first and second grade part-time. She also attended Our Savior Lutheran as an elementary student. She graduated from Kuyper College, and this is her first teaching position.

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— Pastor Paul Naumann,
St. Michael, Portage



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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Caleb Adams (Frankenmuth) to Trinity, Bend, OR
Rev. Gary Bender IIM (Saginaw) to Trinity, Bay City
Rev. Marcus Lane (Seattle, IL) to University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor
Rev. Lawrence Matro (Suttons Bay) to Trinity, Sturgis
Rev. Raymond Parent (Dearborn) to Our Savior, Crestview, FL
Rev. Gary Rohwer (Dearborn) to Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Bethany, OK
Rev. Timothy Selim SMP (Manton) to Faith, Mesick
Rev. Matthew Starner SMP (Wyoming) to St. Matthew, Grand Rapids
Rev. Thomas Vanderbilt (Lansing) to Mt. Calvary, Indianola, IA
Rev. Chad Wright (Norfolk, NE) to Trinity, Utica

Change of Status

Rev. David Fleming (Sr. Pastor) to Associate Pastor, Our Savior, Grand Rapids
Rev. David Sherry to Emeritus
Rev. Jeremy Swem (Associate Pastor) to Senior Pastor, Our Savior, Grand Rapids

Transferred Into District

Rev. Carl Bassett (Emeritus) from Indiana District
Rev. Marcus Lane from Northwest District
Rev. Chad Wright (Candidate) from Nebraska District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. J. Robert Herrod (Emeritus) to Southeastern District
Rev. Howard Mueller (Emeritus) to Texas District
Rev. Thomas Vanderbilt (Lansing) to Iowa West District

Called Home

Rev. David Hakes

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

Calendar of Events

DECEMBER

7-9 Confedex
Tampa, Florida
24 Christmas Eve
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
25 Christmas Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
31 New Year's Eve

JANUARY 2020

1 New Year's Day
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
10-11 Pre-Retirement Conference
Holy Cross, Flushing
19 Epiphany
21 Board of Directors
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Bowdish, Grant (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to St. Mark, Battle Creek
Boyer, Stephanie (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Immanuel, Sebewaing (Christ the King)
Grams, Susan (St. John, Fraser) to Our Shepherd, Birmingham
McManus, Austin (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Guardian, Dearborn
Rice, Diana (Concordia, River Forest) to Lutheran Friends of the Deaf, Mill Neck, NY
Richardson, Brenda (St. Luke, Clinton Township) to St. John, Fraser
Riske, Angela (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Zion, Auburn
Walsh, Hannah (Faith, Port Huron) to Our Shepherd, Birmingham

Change of Status

Earley, Karen (St. Peter, Hemlock) to Emeritus
Jones, Karen (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Emeritus
Viergge, Keith (St. Luke, Clinton Township) to Candidate
von Kampen, Paul (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

von Kampen, Paul (Candidate) to Nebraska District

Transferred Into District

Brauer, Jennifer (Missouri District) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (Northwest)
Seehafer, Tyler (North Wisconsin District) to MOST Ministries, Ann Arbor

Reinstated to the Roster

Baughman, Kristina
Williams, Janice

Resigned From the Roster

Erlenbeck, Jill

Removed From the Roster

Chaiser, Elizabeth

Called Home

Boldt, J. James
Keinath, Kay

School Closings

Marlette, Our Savior Lutheran School

FEBRUARY 2020

1 Theological Conference
Our Savior, Lansing
6-7 Lutheran School Administrators' Snow Tire
Conference
Martin Luther High School, Lansing
20-22 District Stewardship Leaders' Conference
Tempe, Arizona
26 Ash Wednesday

MARCH 2020

7-8 State Basketball Tournament
CUAA and St. Paul, Ann Arbor
17 Board of Directors
Mount Olive, Grand Rapids

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