

October 2020

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IN TOUCH

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

HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

The Five Traits of Healthy Congregations

by Jim Saalfeld

In my role as CEO of Church Extension Fund, I have the pleasure of rejoicing with congregations when buildings are dedicated or mortgages burned, and the tough job of sitting with congregational leadership teams to understand why financial obligations are not being met and questioning whether a congregation can continue to exist. It's a

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IN TOUCH

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“Would your community notice it if the church was suddenly gone?”



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

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humbling role that I take very seriously. In 2019, I recorded 33 personal visits to congregations—mostly of the positive nature. While I do not claim to be an expert, these visits give me some unique perspectives on hallmarks of healthy congregations. So here are my 5 traits of healthy congregations in Michigan.

Healthy Churches ...

1. Engage in their community. Robust community engagement is the norm for churches that report growth and financial stability. This involvement can take many forms but often involves activities that take the members away from the familiarity of the church building. Kid's events, senior ministries, food banks, lecture series, and just about any event that connects the church to its neighbors, and makes the church and its members an essential element of the community. Ask yourself, “*Would your community notice it if the church was suddenly gone?*” Engaged churches would be missed!

2. Foster meaningful fellowship within. This observation may sound controversial for those working to engage the community outside the church, but the two are not mutually exclusive. Healthy churches manage both—engagement outside of the four walls, while promoting friendly and meaningful fellowship within. Visitors can sense a church's level of fellowship. And the place they want to call home is a place where members become the friends who enjoy seeing each other beyond just one hour each Sunday.

3. Demonstrate leadership by both pastor and laity. Trust, engagement, and leadership from both pastor and laity are essential for healthy churches. When I am asked to attend a leadership meeting and the pastor is left out, or if the pastor who is trying to do everything without his lay leaders wants to meet, I usually know what kind of meeting I am heading into. Each have defined roles which must be respected. As with any partnership, if one side believes the other side is not working toward the common goals, progress is thwarted. Disagreements will sometimes happen—but the key is how those are handled. And no matter how hard leadership tries to hide it, the members know when that trust does not exist. Pastors need to listen to the wisdom of the lay leaders. Lay leaders need to be open to new ideas that pastors bring to the table and not undermine those efforts.

4. Operate in fiscally responsible manner. Fiscally responsible churches ask their members for an annual pledge or commitment, create and follow an annual budget, report results, avoid deficit spending and don't defer maintenance.

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Government, a Godly Pursuit

by Robert Eggers

“For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1b).

“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

Given the disarray, godlessness, and sully of so much of the present American political leadership, it’s not hard to see why some Christians refuse to be politically involved or even vote in elections. It’s disheartening to see the downward moral spiraling of our laws, accompanied by the lack of truth, misrepresentations, and shameless personal attacks towards others by some politicians. Let’s turn to the Lord and soak our hearts in His truths to keep perspective and remain involved:

- As with you and me, all of our leaders are wounded sinners in need of grace far more than political power. Pray for all of them and don’t expect perfection. Romans 3:23; 1 Timothy 2:1–4.
- It’s immensely comforting to realize that our chief authority and leader is the Lord Jesus, and our foremost allegiance is to God and not to government. We’re primarily citizens of the Kingdom of God before America. Here we will always be strangers, exiles, and temporary visitors! Colossians 3:2,3; 1 Peter 2:11.
- God created government. He rightfully exercises all authority including power over every government in the world. Jesus is King over kings! God puts world leaders in office and God removes them. Matthew 28:18; Revelation 19:16; Daniel 2:21.
- God desires that you and I would be involved as

Jesus said, *“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s...”* Romans 13:1; Matthew 22:21.

- Caesar’s citizens could do little more than obey and pay taxes. America is a democratic republic. “We the people” are to govern our country under God’s merciful guidance. Therefore “the things of Caesar” for us are far broader. Our duty begins with prayerful discernment, then voting and influencing. Some of us are led to glorify God by becoming political leaders, police officers, judges, etc... Pray about your involvements. What would happen if we the Christians deserted government?
- Remember to feast your mind on godly things that are above, not merely earthly issues. When we spend inordinate amounts of time absorbing daily political issues and battles, we surely can damage our souls, attitudes, and morale. Endless political news can be quite exhausting and even depressing. It’s much better to run to God’s powerful embrace of love and mercy. Let’s quiet ourselves while setting our minds on God, His grace, blessings, mercies, powers, and eternal truths. We’ll regain needed inner peace, and God-inspired political activity. Colossians 3:2. ■

Rev. Robert Eggers served Peace Lutheran Church in Saginaw from 1986 until his retirement in 2006.

On Discouragement

by David Davis

I read two—but only needed to read one—books by Frank Peretti. One was plenty. I mean this in a good sense.

In his book *This Present Darkness*, Peretti gave a great picture of demonic oppression. He personalized how certain demons plague the people of God. The idea was clear in the first book. I do not suppose that he was all right. But he certainly was not all wrong.

Discouragement is a demon. It sits on your shoulder. It bores into your brain. It steals your energy.

At least three staff issues need to be addressed in my congregation. I have addressed none of them well. During the past week, two somewhat glaring mistakes I would have caught if I had proofread more carefully got out into the public. While they were relatively small items in the scheme of things, they were the worst kind of mistakes: unnecessary. One of the books I am reading makes me wonder if about half of what I have going on in the congregation is in error. Add this in: the couple I am counseling whose marriage is getting no better, the Catechism students who seem oblivious to the import of what we are doing, the adults in the congregation who behave like children. And to top it all off, I get too great of a dose of talk radio through the week.

Depressed? No. Not at all.

But discouraged.

Losing Heart

Kids not showing up at a youth event. Counseling a marriage problem that sees no improvement. A classroom that seems little influenced by Jesus' love. Church meetings that take forever and go nowhere. Constant changes due to COVID-19 and no end in sight for the pandemic.

Of course, discouragement means "to lose heart."

Expect it.

As a church worker, expect there to be times when one of Satan's demons strikes at the core of your courage. Just when you need energy, conviction, and joy to move forward on something, you will meet discouragement.

Meet it. But do not give into it. Understand it to be what

it is: a stinking gift from the bowels of hell. Return it to the hellish fiend who sent it ... unopened. Mark it: return to sender.

Dwelling in discouragement is one of the more disastrous things a church worker can do. It can develop into substance abuse, family disruption, binge spending, and general grouchy Christianity.

Ebenezer

1 Samuel 7:12–14 talks about an "Ebenezer Stone." It is a stone of remembrance designed to forestall discouragement.

Because you can anticipate times of discouragement to come, place certain "Ebenezer Stones" in your mind and your life. I turn to these two passages to strengthen my heart and shore up my courage:

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous" (Joshua 1:5–6).

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17–19).

Discouraged?

Yes, now and then. But never for long! *"Greater is he who is in [us] than he who is in the world!" (1 John 4:4 NASB)* Jesus' love restores our heart and keeps our feet firm on the path toward significance. ■

Pastor David A. Davis serves as Senior Pastor of St. Luke, Haslett/Lansing and as West Region Vice President of the Michigan District, LCMS. Rev. Davis and his wife, Sallie, have four grown daughters and two granddaughters. He has an interest in encouraging pastors and supporting congregational organization. He recently published "Toward Significance: A Guide for Pastoring Well." You can find out more at towardsignificance.com.

“Jesus’ love *restores* our heart
and keeps our feet *firm* on the
path toward significance.”

Step Out and Serve – 2020 Edition

by Jeff Heisner



Even in the middle of a pandemic, Shepherd's Gate, Shelby Township had 339 volunteers show up to help people in need. This year's *Step Out and Serve* event felt a little different. There were masks and plenty of social distancing. Most of the projects took place outdoors to ensure everyone's safety during the pandemic. But that didn't affect the outcome: during the weekend of August 24-25, church members worked on close to 30 sites around metro Detroit, helping many people—from elderly members to those in the community who are unable to take care of their yards.

Elli's House, one of the innovative missional ministries supported by the Michigan District, helps get women off the streets and back on their feet after being involved in human trafficking. The house was one of the sites that received the most volunteers, who helped by staining the large deck, cleaning up the yard, basement, and making the home sparkle for the women who live at the Detroit address. They're even planning to add siding to the outside when they come back in the near future.

Deb Ellinger, who runs Elli's House, was blown away by the efforts over the weekend. *"I'm just continually amazed at how God provides amazing people to come here,"* Ellinger said. *"Shepherd's Gate funded this whole thing, all the work was paid for and done by them and it's because of organizations like this that step up and help our ministry that we stay afloat. Seriously, from the bottom of our hearts, we appreciate you guys so much and we are so, so thankful."*

Michelle McKay lives in a Macomb County home.

"I'm just continually amazed at how God provides amazing people to come here."

- Deb Ellinger

She has struggled with health issues this year and has been in and out of the hospital. Her yard had become difficult to maintain, so Shepherd's Gate stepped in and simplified things by adding mulch, flowers, bushes and a tree or two that not only make it easier, but much more beautiful. Tears of gratitude were flowing down McKay's face as they revealed the finished product to her on Sunday afternoon. It was like a dream come true. *"All I mentioned was I'd like some bushes in the front to make it low maintenance,"* McKay said. *"And now everything is here and all I had to do was say what I wanted, and they made it happen."*

The Shepherd's Gate church gym was one of the coolest work sites. There, plastic grocery bags were collected, then sorted, flattened, folded, and cut to make a ball of plarn (plastic yarn). This is then crocheted into a mat and pillow that will go to the homeless.

Despite all that has happened in 2020, this year's *Step Out and Serve* was another huge success. The success was so great, in fact, that Shepherd's Gate plans to continue this serving event on a regular basis throughout the year. ■

Jeff Heisner is the video journalist and digital media director for the Michigan District, LCMS. To watch the video of the day's events, visit michigandistrict.org/soas2020.





Photos courtesy of Lutheran World Relief

Help for Beirut Through Lutheran World Relief

On August 4, 2020, a massive explosion tore through Beirut, Lebanon. In addition to the devastating casualties, injuries, and widespread destruction, Lutheran World Relief learned that three 40-foot shipping containers filled with thousands of handmade mission quilts and school, personal, and baby care kits—amounting to more than 47,000 items—were destroyed. The total value of the lost shipments was approximately \$624,000. These items were bound for families throughout Lebanon struggling with the current economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, including refugee families from Syria and the Palestinian territories. The containers were part of a shipment to be distributed by Anera (anera.org), a non-governmental organization and longtime Lutheran World Relief partner that serves refugees and other vulnerable communities in the Middle East.

The loss of more than 22,000 quilts, sewn by individuals and members of Lutheran congregations across the U.S., could mean a more bitter winter for thousands of refugees. *“Our quilts are made with love by those who painstakingly craft them, and they’re deeply appreciated by the people in distress who receive them, both for the warmth and the message of care they provide,”* said Melanie Gibbons, deputy

director, outreach and engagement at Lutheran World Relief.

LWR determined that the most urgent needs were shelter, food security, and basic needs. For more information or to donate, visit lwr.org.

The Michigan District’s annual fall ingathering for quilts and kits will take place from October 12-21 in several locations across Michigan. For more information, visit michigandistrict.org/lwrgathering or contact Pat Schuknecht, LWR coordinator for the Michigan District, at pschuk58@gmail.com. ■





Photos courtesy of LBT

No Better Story

by Mike Rodewald

My wife and I visited Liberia in March just before the COVID-19 virus was making its impact known on travel. The purpose was to attend the dedication of another New Testament: the Gola language community was celebrating the Bible in their hands, in their own language, *for the first time!*

The joy of that moment was built upon a string of tragedies in the late 1960s that included being in a tough tropical context, missionary families having to leave due to illness, a turnover of local translators, and a civil war that brought everything to a stop.

After the war, Father Garry, an elderly Catholic priest who had remained in Liberia through the unrest, insisted (and persisted) that the Gola language community still needed God's Word in a form they could understand. This time, because of technology and all the previous history upon which to build, the New Testament was completed in less than four years. It was time to celebrate! God used many people so that His Word might reach others.

I brought back several copies of the New Testament and sent one to each of the early missionary families to acknowledge the parts they played.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a

future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11 ESV).

God uses each of us that His Word might go forth and serve together in the story of God's salvation through Jesus. It is a wonderful purpose that God gives us, one with a certain future and a certain hope.

The Gola New Testament took more than 40 years start to finish. But even through sickness and war, God was faithful. The Gola people now have hope through Jesus.

God uses us all in this story—for His purpose. There is no better story. ■

Dr. Mike Rodewald is the Executive Director for Lutheran Bible Translators (lbt.org).



October 2020

LEAP and CEF Work Together to Boost Enrollment in Bay Region Schools



CEF and LEAP have worked with many of the same Lutheran schools and churches throughout Michigan, like Peace, Saginaw pictured above. It was a natural partnership when LEAP reached out to CEF for assistance with funding their new admissions coordinator to help boost enrollment in Michigan's Lutheran schools.



**“With strong enrollment,
we’ll bring Christ to
more children. More will
be saved as Christian
education endures through
the generations. What a
wonderful mission to have!”**

Carol Sweebe

Admissions Coordinator
Great Lakes Bay Region

From the earliest days of the original settlements in the mid-1800s, Michigan’s Lutherans in the Saginaw Valley have put a premium on education. The first thing that each new congregation focused on, after building their church, was to establish a school. LCMS members have always recognized that educating our youth, with Christ at the center of learning, is key to our faith’s continuing strength and renewal.

In that spirit, Church Extension Fund has been pleased to provide a grant to help fund the recent hiring of Carol Sweebe as the

Admissions Coordinator for six Lutheran schools in the Michigan District’s Great Lakes Bay Region. This is an area encompassing Saginaw, Bay City, Midland, and just north of Flint. Carol’s mission: to help the schools recruit and retain students in a time when the region’s economic stresses have made this goal increasingly difficult.

Carol’s hiring has its roots in the development of the Lutheran Educational Advancement Plan (LEAP). Pastors and principals from 22 churches and schools meet regularly to share ideas, work collaboratively, and serve

as a resource for the area's Lutheran schools. For example, the group's frequent "LEAPshops" offer professional development much valued by the schools' staffs and boards. A grant from CEF helped fund the study that recommended LEAP's formation nearly a decade ago.

In recent years, declining enrollments and school closings within the region have raised urgency for a more strategic approach to student recruitment and retention. The LEAP Alliance's Enrollment Growth Committee envisioned the new Admissions Coordinator position, while the Funding Options Committee focused on how to pay for it. Six schools committed to help fund three years of salary; CEF pitched in a matching grant for the first year. LEAP then sought just the right person to take on this critical role.

With God's Hand to Guide

Enter Carol Sweebe. A better prepared and more determined Admissions Coordinator could hardly be imagined. Carol came on board following a long and distinguished career with Dow Chemical and Dow contractors. Over the years, Carol has worked in marketing, quality performance, training, and facilities management—all skills highly transferable to our schools' recruiting and retention needs.

Carol knows personally both the inspiring successes of, and the continuing pressures on, Lutheran education in Michigan. She's a



Having Christ at the center of learning, not only provides a great education, but renews strength in faith and purpose.

long-time member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Midland. Her children and grandchildren have attended Lutheran schools.

It's no accident that Carol came to the Admissions Coordinator position. "I don't believe in coincidences," she says. "In my life I've asked God to guide me to where I can serve Him best. So many people have told me, 'You're perfect for this role.' I know that I'm here because God wants me to be here, at just such a time as this."

Carol hit the ground running, visiting the participating schools, observing students and staff, attending school functions, and absorbing the special culture of each school. Working with school leaders, she quickly clarified expectations for her admissions work.

Tools for the Schools

Carol's priorities have been to develop the process, database, and communications tools

for effective recruitment and retention—all in preparation for the 2020-21 school year's enrollment. "The aim," says Carol, "is to help schools identify families who are the best prospects for Lutheran education, and stay connected with them." She adds, "I facilitate the connections, allowing the schools to focus on other important areas for growth."

All methods and tools are customized for each school. "This is crucial," Carol says, "because each school is distinct. All are Christ-centered, yet all work in their own ways. That's fantastic! It shows there's room for many paths in Lutheran schools."

If anyone can help make great things happen, it's Carol. As she puts it: "With strong enrollment, we'll bring Christ to more children. More will be saved as Christian education endures through the generations. What a wonderful mission to have!"



Church Extension Fund

Church Extension Fund ■ Michigan District of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

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LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LLL News

Dallas Heine called home

Long-time Michigan District Lutheran Laymen's League president Dallas Heine, formerly of Bay City, went home to be with the Lord on March 18, 2020 at age 93.

After retirement, Heine settled in at Fairview, Mich. He and his wife Marie became founding members of Living Waters, Mio. They also became snow birds and traveled to Lady Lake, Fla. between October and April each year. In October 2018, they moved permanently to Lady Lake and later moved to The Villages, Fla.

Due to all the restrictions imposed by the COVID executive orders, the Heines have not been able to have a burial service. The family is planning a graveside service and internment at Hale/Esmond Everygreen Cemetery, Hale, Mich. on Thursday, October 8, at 1:30 p.m.

Heine, a former member of Immanuel, Bay City, became active in the LLL in 1972 and was elected district president in 1976. He was elected twice to the LLL's international Board of Governors and served on the media committee. He was also active in the Saginaw Valley Zone, was a district treasurer, and served on the committees of two LLL conventions conducted in Michigan. He

was a longtime attendee of the LLL Arcadia retreat and served on the planning committee for many years.

Heine was also a veteran of WWII. He enlisted in October of 1944 and finished boot camp in March 1945 for the US Navy. He was on a ship in the South Pacific when the war came to an end.

Cards and letters of condolences can be sent to Darryl Heine; 9651 Ideal Pl; Commerce Twp MI 48382. Suggested memorials include: Trinity Lutheran Church; 17330 S US Hwy 441; Summerfield FL 34491 and Living Water Lutheran Church; 207 Fourth St; P.O. Box 247; Mio MI 48647.

William Eick turns 90

Longtime LLL supporter William Eick of Zion, Harbor Beach turned 90 years old on August 29 and was honored with a card shower. Eick, a retired high school counselor, has been a longtime member of the church. He was also very active in Lutheran Hour Ministries as District Development Chairman, district president, and Region 5 governor.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

39TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

June 24th – 27th 2021 Lexington, KY

Call for Volunteers!

Check out lwmlmichigan.org to volunteer to be a part of this grand event! On the News page is the Volunteer form with the details.



Looking to Jesus, we run the race set before us and proclaim the joy of the Lord.



Find us on Facebook @lwml.mi



Michigan District Annual Report

For the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,

The Michigan District, LCMS serves congregations and church workers as they go about

- Sharing the Good News of Jesus with people who do not know Him (Great Commission Ministry) and
- Seeking out and compassionately attending to people in need (Great Compassion Ministry).

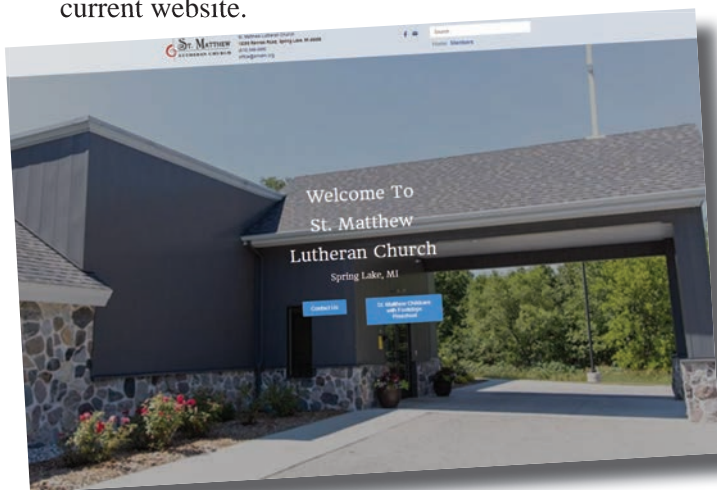
We support congregations so that they can thrive in Christ-centered ministries, loving and joyful atmospheres, and sustainable organizational systems (Healthy Congregations). And we support our church workers so they can also thrive in Christ-centered lives, loving and joyful spirits, and stable family and professional systems (Healthy Church Workers).

Because of your generous support, the District has been able to accomplish much in 2019 towards these Critical Targets of supporting congregations and church workers as they in turn reach out to their communities.

- A Dual Campus Ministry grant was awarded to St. Luke, Haslett and Christ Campus which includes both a suburban and a center city location. This dual campus approach provides both locations with opportunities for learning and support and is a definite two way street through which both sites are more creative, stable, and responsive to outreach opportunities.
- The Digital Footprint Initiative was developed to address many of the challenges some congregations face when they do not have a web presence or do not have skilled, willing, and trained volunteers to update their current website.



Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier
President



- The District's Thought Leader and Innovative Missional Ministry Podcasts were added as one more way to inspire and encourage church workers on the go.
- A Mental Health Case Manager was added to our staff in order to offer a confidential process for church workers and their families to receive guidance when going through a difficult time so they can make an informed decision about their mental and emotional health.
- The Student Debt Assistance through Ministry Focus helps church workers who graduated from our Colleges and Seminaries and are facing a heavy load of debt.

These are some of the new initiatives that began in 2019. However, that's certainly not all. Our ministries throughout the District continued serving their communities and reaching out to the least and the lost. Please take a moment to watch the Annual Report in video format at michigandistrict.org/annualreport.

To stay informed on how God continues to bless and send out His people in the Michigan District, please visit michigandistrict.org and subscribe to the enews, blog, and podcast.

May God continue to bless us all, as Jesus sends each and every one of us into our communities and the world.

Rev. David P. E. Maier

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

Summary of Financial Activities

For the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020

Support, Revenues, and Gains

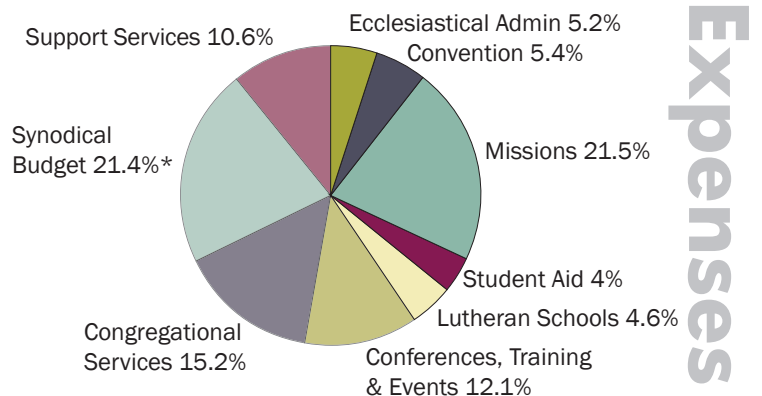
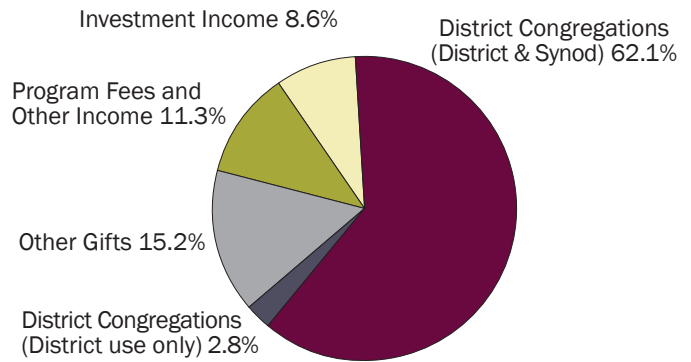
District Congregations (District and Synod).....	4,519,842
District Congregations (District use only).....	202,825
Other Gifts.....	1,105,720
Investment Income.....	623,539
Program Fees and Other Income.....	822,355
Total Support, Revenues, and Gains.....	6,690,423

Expenses

Synodical Budget*	1,516,874
Program Services	
Ecclesiastical Administration	370,548
Convention	379,120
World & National Missions.....	1,522,787
Student Aid.....	284,350
Lutheran Schools.....	323,517
Conferences, Training, & Events.....	859,588
Other Congregation Program Services.....	1,075,576
Support Services	
Management & General.....	482,921
Fundraising.....	267,554
Total Expenses.....	7,082,835

Change in Net Assets 191,446

Revenue



Expenses

Information is taken from the audited financial statements of the Michigan District, LCMS. Copies of the audit report, which include all integral parts of the financial statements, are available from the District Office.

*The Michigan District sent 35% of its unrestricted cash receipts from congregations to national Synod during the fiscal year. The numbers on the financial statements reflect adjustments based on pledges from congregations and to the Synod as required by Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Support for National and International Ministries

For the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020, the Michigan District remitted \$1,534,374 to Corporate (national) Synod, which represents 35% of the District's unrestricted gifts from congregations. The 35 districts of the Synod contribute approximately \$13 million of undesignated revenue to Corporate Synod annually in support of national and international mission and ministry. The balance of the \$81 million 2019/20 budget of Corporate Synod comes primarily from restricted gifts and sales of materials and services.

Allocations of the budgeted use of undesignated revenue for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 are as follows:

Program Services

- Mission & Ministry Programs 33.4%
- Ecclesiastical programs 32.2%
- Management & General 29.4%
- Fundraising 5%

For a more detailed breakdown of the synodical budget visit lcms.org/board.

For More Information & Stories Visit

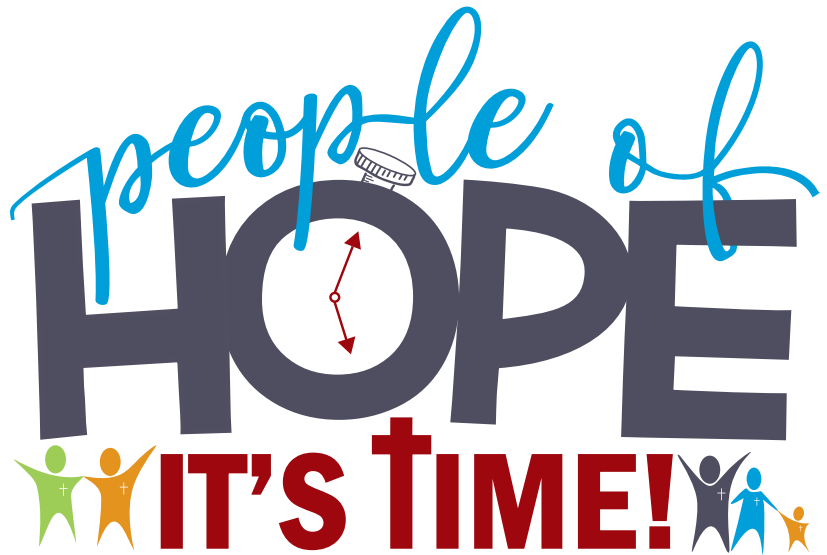
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PEOPLE OF HOPE ... IT'S TIME! 2021 Michigan District Convention June 27-29, 2021

The 103rd Regular Convention of the Michigan District LCMS will be held June 27-29, 2021 at Concordia University Ann Arbor.

The theme for the convention is "People of Hope ... It's Time!" (1 Peter 1:3-5; Romans 10:12-15; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2) President Maier shares, "Because of Jesus paying the price for the sins of the world on Calvary's cross and proclaiming victory over death by His rising from the dead ... 'WHOEVER believes in Him will not be disappointed' and 'WHOEVER will call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.' These Gospel assurances fill us with hope in this darkening world of division, racial unrest, and hopelessness. As people of hope, 'the light of the world', indeed, 'stars shining in the universe,' we are 'working together with Him,' knowing that 'NOW is the favorable time,' 'NOW is the day of salvation,' NOW is the time to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. People of Hope ... It's Time!"

Two separate Call for Nominations mailings went out the end of September to all congregations. The first mailing contained official ballot forms for submitting President and Vice President nominations which are to be mailed to Rev. Darryl L. Andrzejewski; 20014 Holiday Rd; Grosse Pointe Woods MI 48236-2372. The second mailing contained official ballot forms for submitting Secretary, Board of Directors, Church Extension Fund Board of Directors, and District Nominating Committee nominations which are to be mailed to Rev. Robert Appold; 8653 Lilly Ridge Dr SE; Alto MI 49302-9000. If extra copies are needed, please contact Laurie Brown at 888.225.2111 ext. 233 or down-



load at michigandistrict.org/convention. The deadline to submit these nominations is February 27, 2021.

Circuit Forums to elect Circuit Visitors and conduct other official business will be scheduled before January 31, 2021. Please check with your Circuit Visitor if you have questions regarding the circuit forum or circuit visitor nominations.

Overtures may be submitted only by a member congregation, the Board of Directors, an official district conference of ordained/commissioned ministers, or a circuit forum. Overtures must be submitted using the overture template which can be downloaded from the Michigan District website. The deadline to submit overtures is February 27, 2021. No overture received subsequent to that date shall be accepted for convention consideration unless a committee consisting of the District President, the First Vice President, and the District Secretary adjudge it to be a matter of overriding importance and urgency which is not adequately covered by documents already before the convention.

Important dates to place on your calendar:

January 31, 2021
February 27, 2021
May 8, 2021
June 27-29, 2021

Circuit Forums must be conducted before this date
Deadline for all nominations, reports, and overtures
Floor Committee meetings
Michigan District Convention

michigandistrict.org/convention

Here We Stand

Reformation Reading Plan by David Davis

Years ago, while interviewing a person for a staff position, I posed this question: “*What does it mean to have a passion for Jesus?*”

What would you answer?

Here’s what he answered: “*To have a passion for Jesus is to have a passion for his Word because that’s where we find Him.*”

Good answer.

As part of the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the Michigan District embarked on a campaign of Bible reading. The District encouraged people to develop not only the habit of daily Bible reading but the discipline of reading through the entire Bible annually. The *Reformation Reading Plan – Crafted Daily* was developed and posted on the *YouVersion* app so that people could annually read through the entire Bible in an order that reflected which parts most impacted Martin Luther’s ministry.

To date, over 13,000 people have participated to some degree.

It has been said, “You can’t give away what you don’t have.” When it comes to sharing Jesus with others, we can’t give away what we don’t have! We cannot give away a solid, mature testimony of the biblical Jesus if we do not have it. And the surest way to be able to have plenty to share with others is through disciplined Bible reading. An old prayer of the Church is to *read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word of God*.

Here is the best advice I can give you about maturing in Jesus and the Christian faith: this year, read through the entire Bible. When you are done, repeat the same (at least) once every year for the rest of your earthly life. No



other single activity will enhance your effectiveness as a follower of Jesus more than this. And it will take you just 20-30 minutes of daily reading or listening.

By reading through the Bible I do not mean devotional readings in a booklet. I do not mean reading a book about the Bible. I do not mean preparation that you might have for a Bible class. Those have their place. But I mean reading in some fashion every word, from “*In the beginning*” to “*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen*”—although not necessarily in that order.

Yes, the Pharisees made their stock in trade in the Scripture; they were known for knowing the Scripture inside and out. They knew the Scripture, but they didn’t **KNOW** it. Don’t worry that thorough Bible reading will make you into a Pharisee. The problem with the Pharisees was not their discipline but their hearts. Remember, the abuse of something does not nullify the use of it.

This is an invitation, not a burden. Jesus said, “*If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth. And the truth will make you free*” (John 8:31–32 RSV).

You can find more information and start this Bible reading program at crafteddaily.com.

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

(through September 8, 2020)

\$7,077,512.76	Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$6,777,643.06	Cash received which includes \$600,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$238,189.48	Outstanding commitments (pledges)
\$1,347,633.65	Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$3,021,649.65	Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$1,028,291.09	Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$1,618,258.16	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

Camp Restore Detroit Welcomes Volunteers Again

Camp Restore Detroit was back in business in late August and was excited to welcome volunteers back into the community.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the work had ceased until late summer when the community expressed an interest once again in the assistance of CRD volunteers (masked and socially distanced, of course). Outdoor projects included blight removal, simple garden maintenance, and removal of tall grass and debris.

In 2019, CRD hosted 513 night campers and completed 50 community projects. Looking forward, the camp is planning to serve a record number of campers, finish construction and install permanent air conditioning in the dorms, finish both outreach centers, begin more outreach programs (such as tutoring children and adults, resume writing, and hands-on skills), complete the community garden, and plant hundreds of donated trees throughout the community.



Photo courtesy of Camp Restore Detroit

The staff works diligently to keep both its community workers and volunteers safe. Groups of any size as well as individuals are encouraged to work in the Detroit community through CRD. For more information or to register, visit camprestore.org/detroit or send an email to detroit@camprestore.org.

Students Attend Christ Academy

Jenna and Kassidy Siek, members of Trinity, St. Joseph, attended this summer's Christ Academy: Timothy and Phoebe School at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, Ind.

Both schools consist of three important elements: confessional catechesis, liturgical worship, and a fun life together. Students also had the opportunity to witness to their faith while serving the greater community. This tradition of learning, worship, and fun provides an incredible experience for young men and women in high school, especially for those considering a future in church work.

Christ Academy: Timothy and Phoebe School is open to high school-aged students, ages 13-18. For more information, visit ctsfw.edu.



Photos courtesy of Christ Academy



Photo courtesy of St. Thomas, Ann Arbor

In early August, four children were baptized at St. Thomas, Ann Arbor. All of the children attend Freedom Childcare Center, a ministry of St. Thomas to the community. They are pictured here with their parents and foster parents.

Special Recognition

Patron Installed

In August, Mika Patron was commissioned and installed as a Deaconess at Grace, Auburn. Mika is a native Kansan. She attended Bethel College, KS, where



Deaconess Amy Rast, Deaconess Mika Patron, Deaconess Emerita Jean McCain

Photo courtesy of Grace, Auburn

she majored in music, focusing on piano and organ performance. During her time at Bethel, she also studied abroad for two semesters at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, in Wuppertal, Germany. She graduated from Bethel College in May 2017 and began her deaconess studies at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. After two years of studying at the seminary, she began her deaconess internship at Grace, Auburn. She graduated August 5, 2020.

Deaconess Patron shares, *"It has been a great blessing to serve with and learn from the Grace family this past year as their intern. I have especially grown from learning from Pastor, Kantor, and Deaconess Jean."*

Spear Installed

In August, Alexandra Spear was installed as the new middle school Science teacher and 7th grade home-room teacher at St. Paul, Ann Arbor.



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

Miss Spear is from Belleville, Ill. and is a 2020 graduate of Concordia University Ann Arbor with a major in Secondary and Elementary Education Integrated Science. She also received a Lutheran Teaching Diploma. She is new to teaching, but she has loved and shared Jesus her whole life. Miss Spear is passionate and excited about Science and about helping students learn and discover God's incredible creation.

Dunseth to Serve the Deaf in Flint

In August, Rev. Thomas Dunseth was installed as Pastor for Missions at the dual parish of Saint Paul Lutheran Church and Christ the King Lutheran Church of the Deaf in Flint.

Rev. Dunseth has served the Deaf community in Michigan including Ephphatha Mission Society; Incarnate Word, Rochester Hills; Our Savior Deaf, Birmingham; and as the Missionary at Large to the Deaf for the Michigan District, LCMS.

Members came from three different Deaf ministries in the District to show their support and thanksgiving to the Lord for the Michigan District's continual service of Deaf people with the Word of God.

Vicki Rader Celebrates 50 Years as Organist

In August, the congregation of Bethel, Howard City celebrated Vicki Rader for her 50 years as an organist. A service of commemoration was held for her in gratitude for her years of devotion to the congregation. The theme of the service was The Song of the Church and how Christ gives us His gifts in the Divine Service.



Photo courtesy of Bethel, Howard City

Vicki began playing when she was 15 years old and shared that members of the congregation would drive her to worship as she was not a licensed driver. She has no immediate plans to retire.

The Five Traits *continued from page 2*

Here is a good question to keep in mind: “*Why would members of a church run its finances any differently than their own household?*” As with any relationship, money issues are often at the root of discontent in a congregation. Healthy congregations stay healthy by being proactive and addressing shortfalls or unexpected expenses promptly and in a levelheaded way—before panic or financial emergencies occur.



© Nicolas Castro/Stock

more mature generations to stay current on their tithe when vacationing or when services are canceled due to inclement weather.

These are largely non-biblical observations. Jesus must be the focal point for any church to be truly healthy. But I do believe that these practices will only help Jesus’s Word and love reach others. ■

Jim Saalfeld is the Chief Executive Officer of the Church Extension Fund of the Michigan District.

5. Use electronic giving. This is not CEF marketing. Electronic giving really does work! The 2020 coronavirus pandemic proved it better than any testimonial. Churches that used CEF’s Excel In Giving product (or another electronic giving platform) were several steps ahead of the rest when the church doors were unexpectedly closed. Also, think of how younger generations manage their money. Members under 40 rarely write checks or carry cash. So what do you expect they are going to put in a collection plate on Sunday? Electronic giving allows younger members to give in a familiar way—by using credit/debit cards or texting a gift from an iPhone. It further allows the

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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Larry Courson IIM, to St. Michael's, Richville
Rev. Paul Yanke (Fairhope, PA) to Living Faith, Marine City

Transferred Into District

Rev. Bryan Hopfensperger from Minnesota North District
Rev. Daniel Maske from Missouri District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Phil Penhallegon to Missouri District
Rev. David Sutton to N. Wisconsin District
Rev. Jonathan Trinklein to New Jersey District

Called Home

Rev. James Ackerman
Rev. Harry Hanneman

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Greve, Wendy (Emeritus) to Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Ann Arbor
Foiles, Lisa (Candidate) to Faith, Bay City
Mort, Sarah (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Trinity, Berrien Springs
Witchger, Ann (Peace, Saginaw) to Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Ann Arbor

Change of Status

Kelso, Corey (Our Shepherd, Birmingham) to Candidate
Kelso, Nicole (Our Shepherd, Birmingham) to Candidate
Klausmeier, Veronica (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Candidate
Koschmann, Mark (St. John's, Midland) to Emeritus
Sasse, Linda (Peace, Shelby Township) to Emeritus
Seevers, Devin (Trinity, Clinton Township) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Sandor, Donald (Emeritus) to Southeastern District
Schnack, Deborah (Emeritus) to Missouri District
Schnack, John (Emeritus) to Missouri District

Transferred Into District

Sievert, Benjamin (Northern Illinois District) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

Calendar of Events

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

OCTOBER 2020

- 9-11 Lutheran Adult Gathering
Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island
- 11 State Cross Country Meet
- 15 MANS Teachers' Conference
- 15 Heart Issues are Hard Issues Conference
Various Satellite Locations
- 20 Board of Directors
- 21-23 District All Staff Retreat
- 30 Reformation Day

NOVEMBER 2020

- 1 All Saints' Day
- 3 Election Day
- 11 Veterans' Day
- 26 Thanksgiving Day
- 26-27 District Office Closed

DECEMBER 2020

- 24 Christmas Eve
District Office Closed
- 25 Christmas Day
District Office Closed
- 31 New Year's Eve

JANUARY 2021

- 1 New Year's Day
District Office Closed

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

