

December 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



GREAT COMPASSION

Why Just Christmas Compassion?

by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

It is commonly accepted, maybe even expected, that people should be compassionate during the Christmas season. It is a sociological fact that they are. People tend to do more, give more, and help others more during the month of December than at any other time of the year.

Part of the reason for this is that we have a plethora of
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more convenient opportunities to do so during this holiday season. For example, most of us will have given money to the Salvation Army by the end of December, simply because there was someone ringing a bell on a corner or at a grocery store as we walked by.

It is good that we're so willing to show compassion and generosity during the holidays. We have witnessed this same type of outpouring when so many people responded to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and to hurricanes and other natural disasters over the past decades.

But our acts of compassion shouldn't be limited to just the few weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas or to patriotic fervor in response to a terrorist attack or as a response to natural disasters. We are made in the image of God to show "Christmas compassion" year-round. As His followers, we should have a generous, merciful, compassionate spirit year-round.

With that in mind consider Matthew 2:1-12, the account of the wise men visiting Jesus in Bethlehem. Although they came two years after Jesus was born, their focused determination and praise is very instructive regarding deliberate, demonstrated compassion.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

God is generous year-round and on all occasions. We should be too. The inspired Apostle Paul recognized this and wrote in Ephesians 5:1-2: "*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*" (ESV). To "walk in love" is to live all of life showing the love with which God loved us towards God but especially towards others.

Uniquely, the wise men demonstrated this godly love for the newborn King in their gifting. As you're buying gifts this Christmas, keep the following considerations in mind and, with God's help, begin to apply "Christmas compassion" and generosity to your life in January, February, March, and throughout the year.

Let's take a look at each one. First of all, when you give ... **GIVE MORE THAN YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE.**

When the wise men came to see Jesus, they knew they weren't going to a "gift exchange." They were going to see a child, a newborn baby. They were visiting a child who was, quite literally, born in an enclosure for animals. His parents were poor; the possibility of reciprocation did not exist. And, of course, the wise men did not care. They came to give, not receive.

What they were aware of was that God had been generous enough to include them and let them know of His wonderous birth. They were coming to worship the newborn King. And, evidenced in their giving, yet unknown to them, they lived what Jesus had shared with the Apostles. In the words of the Apostle Paul in Acts 20:35: "*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'*" (NIV).

There are situations where hard feelings develop in families because someone didn't get back as much as they put in. They felt cheated. Understand: when it comes to giving, you can't be cheated if you have God's attitude of love and service.

John 3:16 reads, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*" (ESV). God cared enough to give the very best! There is no commodity that could ever match the price paid by the blood of Jesus Christ for the world, for you! There is no power that can match the effect of what the blood of Jesus has done for us. The goal in giving is to give more than you get back. Please go back and read Ephesians 5:1-2.

Maybe you have heard the story of what one person suggested to her

family: “Let’s give each other the same gift this year -- \$20 cash. When it comes time to open the presents, we’ll take the \$20 bill we brought, hand it to the person next to us. They’ll take the \$20 bill they brought and hand it to the person next to them, and so on all the way around the room. That way, everybody gets a fair deal. Everyone walks in with \$20 and walks out with \$20, and everyone is happy.” She was joking, of course, but there are probably some people who like that idea. **Equity is not what giving is about.**

James Hewitt tells a story of a college friend named Paul who received a car from his brother for Christmas! A kid on the street saw his new car and said, “Hey mister, is that yours?” Paul said, “Yes, my brother gave it to me for Christmas.” The kid was amazed and said, “Your brother gave it to you and it didn’t cost you nothing?” The kid then said, “Boy I wish...” and Paul thought he was going to say, “I wish I had a brother like that.” But the street kid surprised him. He said, **“Boy, I wish I could be a brother like that.”**

Me, too. There is a **tremendous reward** in giving. Give more than you expect to get.

Secondly, we also learn from the wise men to **GIVE OUT OF LOVE, NOT OUT OF OBLIGATION.**

Notice what Matthew says ... *“They saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him” (Matthew 2:11 NIV).*

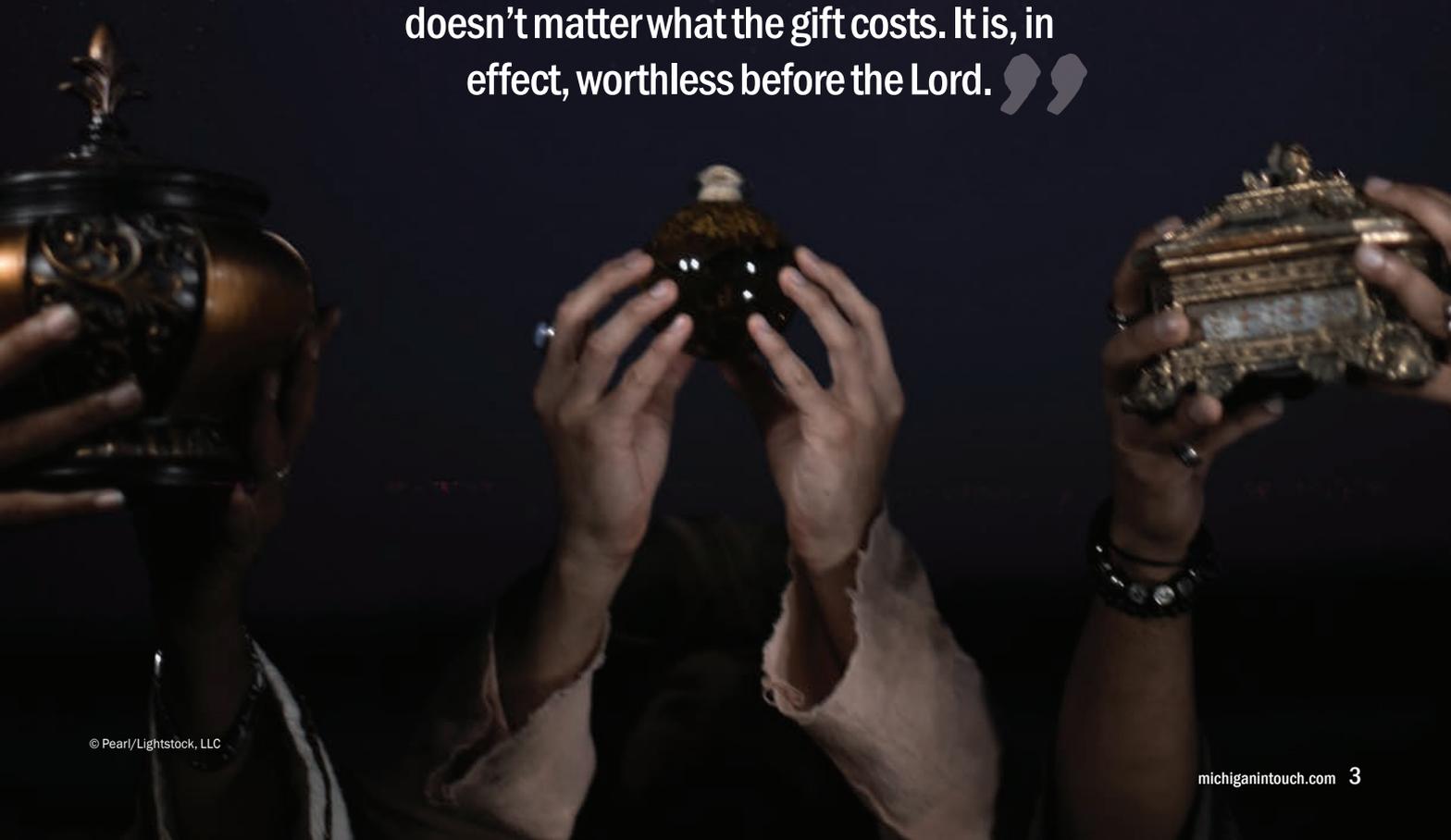
Have you ever received a gift from someone with the impression that the gift was given more out of duty than desire? And if they really had a choice, they wouldn’t have given you anything at all? Have you ever given a gift with (that) “attitude?” That’s not “giving a gift,” it’s “paying a bill.” When you give with that attitude, people can usually tell.

The Bible teaches us to give out of love. In addressing the Corinthian church on this matter Paul writes, *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV).* He gives further clarity when, in the preceding chapter of 2 Corinthians (another chapter about loving and giving), he writes of the Macedonians: *“and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us” (2 Corinthians 8:5 ESV).*

I read about a woman who had a fight with her sister two

continued on page 19

“ ... if your gift isn’t motivated by love, it doesn’t matter what the gift costs. It is, in effect, worthless before the Lord. ”



Wellspring to Open Michigan's First Recovery High School for Teens Struggling with Addiction

“Students who have made a commitment to sobriety, and have begun the tough journey of recovery, don't stand a chance if they are forced back to their school of origin simply because they don't have a choice.”

Wellspring Lutheran Services will launch Michigan's first public recovery high school in January 2021. Wellspring Academy will support teens who have struggled with drugs and alcohol to maintain sobriety as they complete high school and earn their diploma.

"Students who have made a commitment to sobriety, and have begun the tough journey of recovery, don't stand a chance if they are forced back to their school of origin simply because they don't have a choice. In fact, we know that 70% of those students will relapse within six months," says Wellspring president and CEO David Gehm. He continues, *"Our commitment to launch Wellspring Academy comes from knowing that we must do better for them, and is consistent with Wellspring's long-standing focus on serving those in our communities whose needs are not being met. At Wellspring Academy, students will find a place where they can find and fulfill their purpose, with a community who will love and support them every step of the way."*

Despite Michigan's disproportionately high rates of teen drug and alcohol use, the nearest recovery high school is currently located in Columbus, Ohio. The Michigan Department of Education estimates each year nearly 2,000 students in southeast Michigan alone leave or are kicked out of school for drug and/or alcohol use. Wellspring Academy will have the capacity to serve up to 120 high school students (grade 9–12), from southeast Michigan and surrounding areas at its 80-acre campus in Farmington Hills.

Recovery schools are not a substitute for substance use treatment. These schools help students find their way to recovery by:

- Providing smaller classrooms with instructors who

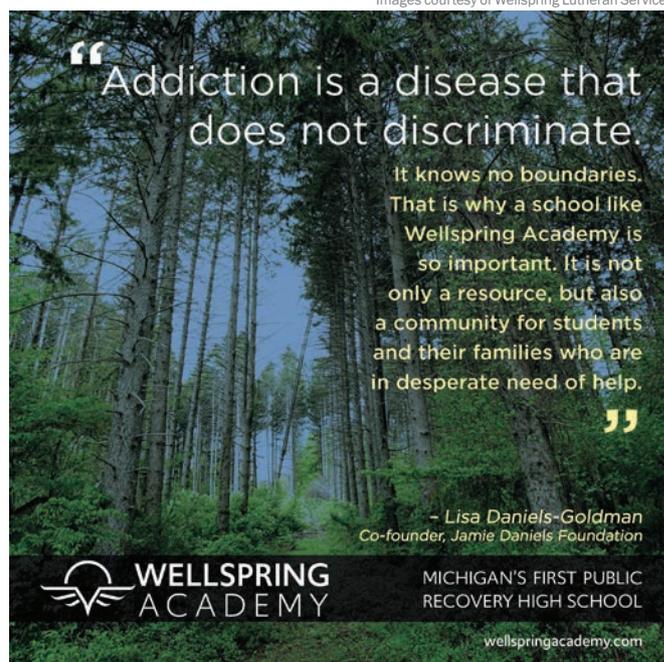
build and reinforce a recovery-oriented culture.

- Customizing workloads to respond to the academic challenges that are common among recovering students.
- Providing a range of recovery-enabling enrichment activities, such as daily meetings with recovery counselors, onsite 12-step meetings and available peer supports; and
- Creating a welcoming environment where students are encouraged to be open about relapse (when it occurs) rather than hiding it.

The recovery high school will be established as a free-standing charter school supported by Michigan International Prep School (MIPS). At the core of any recovery school is a rigorous curriculum that results in students meeting state requirements to receive a traditional high school diploma. The existing school building at 28000 W. 9 Mile Road on the Wellspring campus in Farmington Hills will serve as the recovery high school and will incorporate the other existing campus amenities. Those include: library, computer lab, gymnasium, weight room, dining hall, auditorium, art studio, ball fields, and a running track.

Wellspring Academy will launch virtually in January 2020 with wrap-around recovery support services and a drop-in center at the Farmington Hills campus. In-person classes will officially begin in September 2021. For more information about Wellspring Academy and information on how to enroll your student, please visit wellspringacademy.com. ■

Images courtesy of Wellspring Lutheran Services



Why are there *12 Days* of Christmas?

by: Ryan Tinetti

After the celebration of Jesus' nativity we find ourselves in the middle of the 12 days of Christmas. Or are those 12 days before Christmas? Aren't they December 13th-25th?

Some time back I was standing in the elevator at the hospital, reading a poster on the wall: "Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas with great deals!" There were savings promised at the gift shop each of the first dozen days of December. According to the poster, December 1st-12th were the supposed 12 Days. Are they?

In fact, both of these interpretations of the 12 Days of Christmas miss the mark. The truth underscores the deep delight of this holiday.

The ghost of Christmas passed

The "12 Days of Christmas" refer to the 12 days from December 25th through January 6th. Christmas Day is the beginning of a festival that carries on for nearly two weeks, up until the feast of Epiphany. "Christmas" isn't just a day, in other words; it's a season.

Now, few in our society would dispute that there is such a thing as the "Christmas season," but they might define it quite differently. This season would extend from, say, Thanksgiving until perhaps December 26th, when the radio stations drop their Christmas tunes like a hot coal in the stocking and go back to their regularly scheduled programming.

But as the world gives up the ghost of Christmas passed, the Church is just getting started with her yuletide celebrations. She has waited and watched throughout Advent—which tends to just be lumped in with what author Gregory Jones calls "HalloThanksMas." She has refrained from singing her Gloria in Excelsis ("Glory to God in the highest!") until she can sing it with the angels on Christmas Eve. Now, she's ready to party.

Which gets at the deeper reason why there are 12 Days of Christmas. It's a fact of the calendar, yes, but it's more than that.

Too much for one day

The real reason that Christmas is 12 days is that the feast is too glorious for just one day. As Elsa Chaney writes in her book, the suitably titled "Twelve Days of Christmas", "*So bright is the radiance of the Light which has come at Christmas, so awesome is the mystery we celebrate, that a single day's observance barely initiates us into the meaning of the feast.*"

There's a lot of joy to pack into this stocking.

And so I think it is high time that Christians reclaim the 12 Days. Too long have we allowed our celebrations to be co-opted by the culture's "Christmas season." Keeping the 12 Days is a path toward greater joy, greater festivity and, perhaps, even greater sanity. ■

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

“So bright is the radiance of the Light which has come at Christmas, so awesome is the mystery we celebrate...”



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schultz Photography

MOST Ministries: Mobilized for Mission

by Ruth Martin



Despite having to cancel 31 of the 33 mission trips that were on MOST Ministries' schedule this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff and Board of Directors have not been deterred from our shared responsibility to further MOST's mission. In fact, we are making plans to expand the reach of the Ministry and increase its impact in the mission field after we are allowed to resume sending teams—which we hope and pray will be in 2021. Rather than allow ourselves to get discouraged and become fearful about what we could not control as the pandemic unpredictably continued, our staff has: continued to pray together each morning, seeking God's guidance and blessings on the Ministry and our Ministry partners; and focused our efforts on doing whatever we can do to keep the Ministry operating smoothly, stay financially healthy, and remain poised to send volunteer teams to serve in other countries as soon as international borders and travel restrictions are lifted for visitors.

This year MOST Ministries applied for more grant monies than ever before in order to reduce the cost for individuals to participate on a MOST mission team. We changed many of our internal processes to become a more efficient and effective ministry. We improved the curriculums for several of our on-the-field mission projects that were in need of a partial overhaul. We explored new types of service projects that could make a greater impact on the lives of hundreds of impoverished families and individuals who are marginalized and have no social safety net. We have also been

reaching out to more Lutheran pastors and missionaries in areas of the world where a MOST team has never been or hasn't been in a long time, so we can help them expand their church through acts of service and sharing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in their communities.

As you can see, the pandemic has not stopped the work and goal of MOST Ministries to "impact the world for Christ through short-term missions."

One of our Board members recently sent me these encouraging words from scripture:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

And, together, we say "Amen!" MOST Ministries is continuing to move forward! God's promises, along with our Ministry partners' encouraging words and faithful support, are constant reminders that He is more powerful than all of the difficulties and tragedies that the world, our country, and our Ministry have encountered this year. And He has not and will not let these circumstances overwhelm us!

In November, MOST Ministries hosted a one-hour virtual event titled "Mobilized for Missions." The virtual event included both live presentations and several short videos from many of our international hosts, team members, team leaders, and other ministry partners.

For further information about MOST Ministries and/or to view the virtual event, visit mostministries.org/mobilized_for_missions/. ■

Ruth Richert Martin is the Executive Director of Mission Opportunities Short Term (MOST Ministries), based in Ann Arbor, Mich.

... impacting the world for Christ through short-term missions.



DECEMBER 2020

Though the Times Test Us, Our Blessings Abound – CEF’s Core Values at Work



PROVEN



DEDICATED



FOCUSED

Proven, Dedicated and Focused are three core values that have defined CEF for the last 120 years. This year, more than ever, as a global pandemic reshaped our lives, those values helped to uphold CEF’s mission to make resources available to members and churches in carrying forward the Great Commission.

PROVEN investment products, measurable results

Investing with CEF can help you steer your own steady financial course through the COVID storm and beyond.

An **Individual Retirement Account** remains a great way to build financial security for your golden years. CEF offers Traditional and Roth IRAs, whether you’re transferring, rolling over, or creating a new IRA account. Choose from our Fixed Rate Notes, Variable Rate Notes, Dedicated Savings Certificates, and other IRA funding options.

Does your church or school have a loan with CEF? If so, your individual IRA, just like all CEF

investments, can help reach the ministry-wide investment level needed to qualify for our new **Investment Rebate Program**. This gives cash back – up to 1% of the CEF loan balance. The more you and your church invest, the greater the cash rebate. Think of how your church or school can use these extra funds to help build and grow!

Want to continue blessing your family and Building God’s Kingdom beyond your time on Earth? Let CEF’s **Gift Planning Services** help you leave a Christian legacy. In partnership with the LCMS Foundation, we’ll ask questions, listen, and understand your estate planning wishes – just as we’ve done for hundreds of church members throughout

Michigan. And we’ll do this at no cost to you.

Contact CEF to explore your many options for our investment programs and services.

DEDICATED Christian financial management since 1901

CEF helped Build the Kingdom in ways beyond our traditional investment and funding offerings in 2020. We supported everything from school recruiting to building security.

From Lutherans’ earliest days in Michigan, congregations have committed to educating our youth in Christ-centered ways. This has been key to our faith’s continuing strength and renewal. In that spirit,

ACTION 2020: HOW CEF STEPPED UP TO HELP IN THIS COVID-SHAKEN YEAR

This past year has been like no other year in Michigan District memory. For many of our churches, the coronavirus outbreak has limited in-person services, which has caused giving to fall short of normal levels. Here are ways Church Extension Fund has stretched to do more this year for our congregations in need:



EMERGENCY LINES OF CREDIT

With our special one-year line, interest is a full 1% below our regular LoC rate.



ELECTRONIC GIVING

Church members' participation in *Excel in Giving* is up 60% over last year.



“BRIDGING THE FUNDING GAP”

This April webinar advised on ways to get help in funding, including stimulus.

CEF has helped fund the hiring of an **Admissions Coordinator** for six Lutheran schools in the Great Lakes Bay Region (Saginaw, Bay City, Midland, and just north of Flint). The purpose: to help these schools recruit and retain students in a time when the region's economic stresses have made the goal increasingly difficult.

This new position has its roots in the development of the **Lutheran Educational Advancement Plan (LEAP)**, which CEF originally helped fund with a grant. LEAP regularly brings together pastors and principals from 22 churches and schools. They meet regularly to share ideas, work collaboratively, and serve as a resource to the schools.

This year CEF also saw an opportunity to enhance safety measures in ministries across our state. Sadly, security breaches have become all too common in places of worship and learning. In the worst cases, these breaches have resulted in deadly violence.

That in mind, CEF offered the **Security Enhancement Grant and Loan Program** this year. It provided opportunities to help qualifying ministries improve the security in their churches, schools, and day care centers. Grants of up to \$2,500 were given, while preferred-rate loans allowed for security enhancements exceeding what the grants could allow.

FOCUSED on funding the needs of Michigan District congregations

How Our Lord inspires us! And never more so than now, in these COVID-challenged times. These Michigan District churches, and schools have recently mobilized, with CEF's help, to better serve their congregations and communities:

- **St. Lorenz Lutheran** of Frankenmuth has opened its state-of-the-art 800-seat Worship and Event Center. It's now home to the church's popular weekly Connect service, featuring modern sight, sound, and interaction.

- **Immanuel Lutheran**, near Saginaw, first used some empty classrooms to provide childcare services. Then, when demand exceeded capacity, a CEF construction loan helped Immanuel add a whole new childcare wing.
- **Mt. Hope Lutheran** in Grayling collaborated with community leaders to conceive and build the expansive new Crawford AuSable Day Care and Preschool. It's a resource so urgently needed by the area's parents.

As these stories prove, we can not only survive these uncertain times, we can genuinely thrive in them – by trusting in God and finding refuge and peace in His loving arms.

Contact CEF to explore your many options for our investment programs, volunteering opportunities, and services.

Call Bill Burmeister at 734-242-3944 or Andy Sohn at 734-213-3242 to learn more.



Church Extension Fund

Church Extension Fund ■ Michigan District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-3098 ■ www.mi-cef.org
Offices: 800-242-3944

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

(through November 1, 2020)

| | |
|----------------|---|
| \$7,129,261.77 | Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals |
| \$6,885,885.09 | Cash received which includes \$600,000 CEF Matching Funds |
| \$186,726.46 | Outstanding commitments (pledges) |
| 1,501 | Total Contributors |
| 1,338 | Individual Contributors |
| 163 | Congregations Contributing |
| 45.3% | % of Michigan District Congregations currently participating |
| \$1,356,902.62 | Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships |
| \$3,062,506.07 | Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry |
| \$1,033,275.06 | Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment |
| \$1,619,897.82 | Total given/pledged for International Ministries |



Here We Stand

Bible verse: **Psalm 71:17-18**

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

herewestand.michigandistrict.org

A GREAT WAY TO GROW YOUR ENDOWMENT FUND!

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- \$100,000 minimum
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Church Extension Fund

Learn more!

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Email: cef@mi-cef.org

Visit: www.mi-cef.org



Interest rate is fixed for the term of note. Rate is reviewed and may adjust monthly. Applies to new or existing dollars. New and maturing IRAs only. Early Termination Penalty will apply. Multiple accounts are subject to a minimum investment of \$100,000 with a maximum aggregate investment of \$500,000. The information provided here is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular. CEF investments are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC, or any other governmental agency.



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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

My Dear Friends in Christ,

A blessed Advent and Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones. By the grace of God, may your Christmas season be filled with God's joy, love, and the gift of laughter, as you prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior in the coming days.

2020—Some say it is a year to remember and others say it is a year to forget. I can see it both ways. The COVID-19 virus has significantly changed our way of life, and there is “wonder” as to what will happen with a new president of the United States. Yet here we are, at the end of perhaps the most challenging year we have ever experienced, preparing to again celebrate the birth of Jesus, Our Savior, the One whose birth we know is certain and true.

The world around us is filled with uncertainty and change, but our joy comes in confidently knowing, believing in, and having a personal relationship with Jesus who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Let us be confident and joyful in that reality.

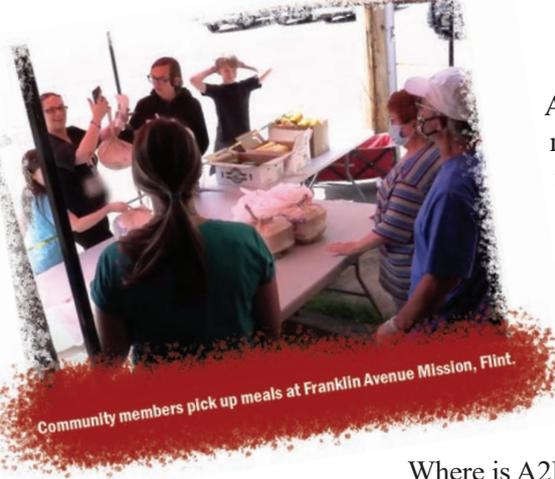
*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday,
today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).*

We know this to be true in the mission and ministries of the Michigan District as well. Sure, we have been impacted in our ministries just as you have been impacted in your homes. Yet just as you continue to forge ahead, so do we. The powerful, life-changing words of the Gospel continue to be shared in the congregations of the Michigan District and in the ministries we provide. Why this confidence? Because Jesus is constant through the Word, sacraments, and His promises. Jesus' love, presence, and power never change.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E) urban ministries. In our multiple urban ministry centers in Michigan, hope continues to be found in the Good News of the Gospel as it is shared with hundreds upon hundreds of people.

Pray with me that our urban centers are blessed as were the cities in the early church as in Acts 2:47, “*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*”

Continued on reverse side



A2E impacts lives in the Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, and Benton Harbor areas. A2E ministries continue to grow each year as new opportunities for serving communities are identified, and as the urban missionaries of the Michigan District respond to those new and ever-changing opportunities.

With continuing ministry growth, there is also continued growth in expenditures. Additional staff and resources are needed to serve an ever-increasing number of people. The annual expenditure budget for A2E is currently over \$780,000 and we, dear friends, are delighted to spend every penny because A2E is making a difference.

Where is A2E making a difference? In Detroit through Bethany, Outer Drive Faith, Pan De Vida, Charity, and Family of God Lutheran Churches, and also through The Luke Project - 52 Clinic, Camp Restore, and Elli's House; in Flint through Franklin Avenue Mission; in Pontiac through St. Paul Community Lutheran Church; and in Benton Harbor at Benton Harbor Outreach Ministry.

I invite you to prayerfully and generously support this vital ministry to the children and families served by A2E through its multiple urban centers in Michigan. As you make your Christmas and/or year-end giving decisions, please consider investing in the lives of those being impacted for God's Kingdom here and for eternity through A2E.

With your continued generosity, the Michigan District will be able to meet an ever-growing need for serving families in several major urban communities.

Thank you again for your prayerful consideration. Please know your gift will be a wonderful blessing to someone this Christmas season and beyond!

Merry Christmas,

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



P.S. Your generous gift will impact the Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E) component of the **Here We Stand** campaign's Innovative Missional Ministry initiative, and will receive a 10% match from the Michigan District Church Extension Fund campaign matching funds commitment.

P.P.S. If your personal passion is supporting one of the other initiatives of the **Here We Stand** campaign (Professional Church Worker Scholarships, International Ministry, or Michigan District Endowment), please know that your support of one, or more, of these initiatives would be most appreciated and also receives a 10% match through the generosity of the Michigan District Church Extension Fund.



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

LLL Advent Devotions and Ambassador Program Activities

Advent Devotions

What better news is there than to know that God is always by our side? In *God with Us*, we learn again what God the Father has done—He has kept His promise. He has announced that grace and forgiveness are available to all, freely given in the birth of Jesus: God's Son, our Savior. He is Immanuel, "God with us."

The story of God coming to earth as a human child is a profound one. In *God with Us*, we find no aloof divinity Who is unconcerned and remote somewhere in the cosmos. Rather, He is deeply involved in all our affairs—our joys as well as our heartaches. He *knows* us for He became one of us. At Christmastime, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, Lord of the universe, Savior of the world, Shepherd of our lives.

Daily Devotions from LHM will help strengthen and encourage your faith as you do the same for others. Have them delivered right to your inbox, podcast the audio devotional, access them on your mobile device through the FREE app, or listen with Spotify, iHeart Radio, Alexa, or Google Home. Seasonal Devotions for Advent and Lent are also available in both English and Spanish. Perfect for personal reflection or to share with family, friends

and congregations, these seasonal meditations will help prepare you to celebrate the true meaning of these seasons.

For more information, visit lhm.org.

Ambassador Program Activities

- The main activity is simple—open and read the monthly Ambassador email! These emails contain new product and program information. You can then share the information that fits your congregation.
- The LLL Districts will be hosting a yearly training event, in some cases virtually. You will be contacted about upcoming events beginning in 2021. (You can expect to see more details on hosting districts, locations, and virtual options for each convention in these monthly emails.)
- Finally, LHM Ambassadors are encouraged to lead activities in your congregation such as book clubs, listening clubs, Gospel Adventures groups, or Bible studies. Watch your Ambassador email update for special gifts each year to help promote these activities.

If you are interested in being an ambassador, contact John Raffel at john.raffel@gmail.com today.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

RUNNING THE RACE...LOOKING TO JESUS 2021 National LWML Convention

Be a part of this grand event and help us make it a success! The Volunteer form with the details is on our website:

lwmlmichigan.org/convention/national



GET THIS SHIRT!

BUY THIS LIMITED TIME OFFER
SHIRT AT LWMLMICHIGAN.ORG
WITH THE SHIRT ORDER FORM



Call for VOLUNTEERS!

To All Future Church Workers

Is there is a young person in your congregation that might be interested in church work? If so, connect them to Concordia University Ann Arbor to learn more about church work programs for pre-pastoral, pre-deaconess, parish music, family life, or Lutheran education. No more honorable vocation exists than church work: equipping the saints for the work of ministry and bringing others into God's family through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This work of ministry is what Concordia University Ann Arbor will train you to do in its church work programs. For more information, contact Pre-Seminary Director Rev. Ted Hopkins at Theodore.Hopkins@cuaa.edu.



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

CUAA Undergraduate Enrollment at All-Time High Amidst COVID
Bucking the national downward enrollment trend, Concordia's fall 2020 total undergraduate enrollment count—1,010—is up 34 students from last fall's census number, and CUAA's 250-person freshman class beats out last year's total by 27. The freshman class also has the highest average GPA since the merge with the Mequon campus in 2013. To read more: michigandistrict.org/cuaaenrollment2020.

God Opens a Window

Since Messiah, Carrollton celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2014, the struggling little elderly congregation was determined to fulfill its mission. Some of the significant activities in which it played a role were: organizing Practical Ideas for Community Outreach (PICO) I through VI; holding monthly Monday School at the Rescue Mission; holding a birthday party at the Mission every other month; food collections to support the food pantry at a sister church; collection of personal hygiene products to donate to the Mission, etc.

The COVID-19 virus stopped all these activities dead in their tracks, along with the congregation's annual display at the Carrollton Elementary Open House in late August, a float in the local high school homecoming parade, and its annual Trunk or Treat, which had nearly 1,000 people visit in 2019.

Where the virus closed doors, the Lord opened a window. When the elementary school expressed its disappointment that Messiah would be unable to offer Trunk or Treat, it approved the church's idea of assembling bags of treats, put together by people wearing masks and sanitary gloves. The treat bags were handed out on October 28 and 29 at the school's regular food giveaway to low-income households. Besides generous donations from members of wrapped mini candy bars, Thrivent Action Team funding was acquired.



Photo courtesy of Messiah, Carrollton

The assembly line included Messiah youth, current and recent confirmation classes, and other members.

Given the generous support, Halloween treats were also supplied to the Rescue Mission's children as well as Messiah's children.

The Messiah members thank and praise the Lord for this window of opportunity and pray He was honored in its endeavors.

Greater Things 2020 for Camp Restore Detroit



Camp Restore Detroit's **Greater Things 2020: Hope in the City** fundraiser is on! This is your opportunity to hear about Camp Restore and all the great things that God has done in 2020 and all the even greater things that are on their way! With so much negativity in 2020, we would like to take a moment to celebrate the good, to be thankful for the positive things, and to look to an even better 2021.

We would like to celebrate this with you and your friends and family. The virtual event will be held as a YouTube watch party with a bit of live interaction on Friday December 4, 2020 from 6–8 p.m.

Even better, this year we can share this event with our friends from across the nation as it will be held virtually. While we will miss your smiling faces, we are thrilled to be able to reach so many more people.

Some highlights will include:

- Guest of Honor: Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, Director of Black and African Ministry, LCMS Office of National Mission
- An update on 2020 blessings and plans for 2021
- A tour of our campus with some GREAT news!
- A silent auction
- Party packages for your home party
- Church partner highlights and more!

For more information, contact Elizabeth Parrish at elizabeth@camprestore.org or follow this link camprestore.org/greaterthings2020/.

Subscribe or Give a Gift Subscription this Christmas

Each year, your church office has the opportunity to subscribe its members to the *The Lutheran Witness* for \$11.60/year. *The Lutheran Witness* is the official periodical of the LCMS and includes a *Michigan In Touch* supplement in each edition that is subscribed through the District Office.

Forms to order or renew a subscription were sent in November. If you would like to re-subscribe or give a gift subscription, contact your church office.

Although the new subscription year does not begin until March 2021, orders need to be submitted to the District office by December 15, 2020.

CEF Security Enhancement Grant & Loan Program Ends Soon!

Church Extension Fund's Security Enhancement Grant & Loan Program has a deadline of January 31, 2021. If your church has not taken advantage of this great opportunity, please bring this to the attention of your pastor or church council. For more information, visit mi-cef.org/about/grants or call 800.242.3944.



Special Recognition

Wargo Celebrates 40 Years in Ministry

In September, Living Faith, Marine City gathered to celebrate Rev. Paul Wargo's 40 years in the ministry.

Pastor Wargo graduated from Concordia Teachers College in 1963 and began the 15 years he would teach in Lutheran schools, the last six of which were spent at Lutheran High School North.

In 1976 he conducted the worship services on Harsens Island following the death of Pastor Robert Moehring. That led to his decision to enroll at the seminary, and in 1980 he was ordained and installed at a dual parish in Clare (Prince of Peace) and Harrison (St. Luke), Mich. From there he went to Trinity, Wyandotte, serving as senior pastor for six years. In 1992, Pastor Wargo returned to the Lutheran High Schools serving as principal, assistant superintendent, and ending his career teaching Old Testament back at Lutheran North for seven years.

During his time back at the High Schools, Pastor Wargo served several vacancies in Lutheran congregations, including St. Peter, Fair Haven and Our Saviour, Armada. He also served as the part-time pastor

of Cedar Crest, White Lake for many years.

During the celebration, Rev. Gerhardt Doroh officiated and Rev. Dr. John Herzog was the guest speaker with an excellent sermon titled, "Rate your Casting Skills." Many family and friends attended the service.

A brunch was served after the service. It was a special day for Rev. Paul and Judy Wargo and the members of Living Faith.



Photo courtesy of Living Faith, Marine City

Storck Installed

Rev. Timothy D. Storck was installed on October 4 at Good Shepherd, Chesterfield. A 2007 Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne, Ind.) graduate, Rev. Storck served Messiah Lutheran Church in Grand Junction, Col. and Trinity Lutheran Church in Fort Morgan, Col. before accepting the call to serve at Good Shepherd.

He and his wife, Sarah, are licensed foster parents in the state of Colorado. Pictured (front row l-r): Rev. Ed Steeh, Sarah Storck, Rev. Tim Storck, Rev. Barry Mueller, and Rev. Paul Burrows; (back row l-r): Rev. Dr. Robert Kasper and Rev. Mike Lutz.



Photo courtesy of Good Shepherd, Chesterfield

Why Just Christmas Compassion continued from page 3

years previous and, even though they're still not on speaking terms, they exchange gifts each year at Christmas! When asked why, "Why?" she responded, "Because we give gifts to everyone in our family." Obviously, this gift has very little meaning and very little value. The gift she really needs to give is the gift of reconciliation.



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It is as simple as this: if your gift isn't motivated by love, it doesn't matter what the gift costs. It is, in effect, worthless before the Lord. The wise men's gifts were special not because they were valuable, but because they were given with a heart full of respect, love, and honor for Jesus.

A number of years ago, Pennsylvania's former Governor Tom Ridge, who became the first Homeland Security Chief, sent out \$100 rebates on school-district property taxes to Pennsylvania's residents. (This happened just before the election, so naturally he was accused of trying to buy votes.) However, hundreds of taxpayers responded in an unexpected way: they returned the money to school districts. The Philadelphia school district alone received more than \$40,000 in 'rebate gifts.' The most interesting part of this is that the majority of gifts came from people outside the Philadelphia school district, who felt the under-funded city schools needed the money more than their suburban schools. These people had nothing to gain by sending their money to another school district. They did it because they cared (*Newsweek*, Dec.11, 2000, p.64). **Give out of love and heartfelt determination and care, not obligation.**

The third consideration for giving is the most difficult because it is deliberate, contemplative, and somewhat time consuming: **GIVE GIFTS THAT TELL PEOPLE WHAT THEY'RE WORTH.** Matthew writes ... "they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh" (*Matthew 2:11 NIV*).

Interesting gifts for a child, aren't they? Could these gifts have special meaning? According to the customs of the day

- **gold** was the gift for a king;
- **incense** was the gift for a priest; and
- **myrrh** was the gift for one who was to die—it was used to embalm the bodies of the dead.

When the wise men brought their gifts to Jesus, they didn't come bearing trinkets for a child. They brought gifts that indicated who He truly was—the king of kings, the great high priest, the one who would die for the sins of the world. Did they fully understand this or were their actions completely inspired by the Holy Spirit ... or a little of both? I don't know. Nonetheless, I still find it instructive.

When you give, give a gift that says, "I believe in you. You're worth something. God has an amazing future for

you and for those whom you will bless."

Do you remember the movement in Los Angeles to give new shopping carts to the homeless, because many of them were using old, beat-up carts? We do have an obligation to help the homeless. However, the best solution is not to give them new shopping carts—a gift that seems to say, "You're homeless and that's all you'll ever be, so here's a new buggy. Now leave us alone."

A much better gift, obviously, would be to give the homeless a place to sleep, or job training, or substance abuse counseling, or whatever it is they need to become the person God created them to be. The best gift would be to help them get to a point where they too could know and love Jesus. As a society, as a church, and as individuals, we need to look for ways to give gifts that affirm the value of the person receiving the gift.

PLEASE THINK ABOUT THIS: we should not give with an attitude that says, "I'm giving this gift because I'm generous," but rather with the attitude that says, "I'm giving this gift because you're worth it ... especially to Jesus."

Jesus' beloved disciple reminds us: "*We love because he first loved us*" (*1 John 4:19 ESV*). We now have the privilege of giving because we were first loved and given to. We now have the privilege of giving remembering that **everything** we have is a gift from God.

The wise men brought valuable gifts to Jesus because they recognized His value. When you give, give a gift that says, "You're worth something to me and to the Lord Jesus." I have found that this exercise always leads to prayer and thanksgiving for the individual.

During the Advent and Christmas seasons, as you continue your preparation for the celebration of Christmas and also for Christ's return again in glory, remember that **giving** does play a crucial role in experiencing Christ's presence, power, and peace during this Holy Season ... and throughout the rest of the year.

In **imitation** of our God from the **cleansing of the heart** that He brings and through the **strength** He supplies, let us endeavor to ...

- give more than we hope to get;
- give out of love, not obligation;
- give in a way that communicates to others, "You are worth something to me and especially to the Lord Jesus Christ."



God cared enough to give His very best. May we do the same. ■

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier serves as president of the Michigan District, LCMS.

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Mark Bowditch (CNH District) to Immanuel, Grand Rapids
Rev. Henry Hales (Palms) to dual parish Trinity, Minden City
Rev. Timothy Kade (English District) to Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
Rev. Dale Kleimola (Emeritus) to Grace, Leslie

Change of Status

Rev. John Bookshaw (Big Rapids) to Emeritus
Rev. Daniel Howard (Warren) SMP to General

Transferred Into District

Rev. Mark Bowditch (Candidate) from CNH District
Rev. Timothy Kade (Rochester Hills) from English District
Rev. Paul Yanke (Eastern District)

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Robert Gadeken (Emeritus) to Missouri District
Rev. David Rufner (Candidate) to Pacific Southwest District

Called Home

Rev. Warren Paulson (Ypsilanti)

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Matyas, Valerie (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Immanuel, Saginaw
Pelltier, Carol (Candidate) to St. Peter, Macomb
Ressler, Amanda (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to St. Paul, Trenton

Resigned From the Roster

Young, Kathryn

Called Home

Sutter, Irene

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

District Office Notice

The District Office remains appointment-only due to the pandemic. Please call if you need to set up an appointment.

michigandistrict.org | 888.225.2111



Calendar of Events

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

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
- 26 Board of Directors' Meeting
St. Luke, Haslett
- 31 Deadline for Circuit Forums

FEBRUARY 2021

- 27 Deadline for Convention Nominations, reports, and overtures

APRIL 2021

- 16–18 The Katie
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City
- 18–20 Office Personnel Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City

MAY 2021

- 3–5 North & East Pastors' Conference
Tawas Bay Beach Resort
- 8 Michigan District Convention Floor Committees
District Office, Ann Arbor
- 11–12 South & East Pastors' Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 12–13 Circuit Visitors' Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 17–18 West Pastors' Conference
The Inn at Harbor Shores, St. Joseph
- 26–27 Intentional Interim Spring Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

JUNE 2021

- 17–18 English District Convention
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 22–24 Ohio District Convention
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 24–27 National Lutheran Women's Missionary League Convention
Lexington, Kentucky
- 27–29 Michigan District Convention
Concordia University Ann Arbor