

January 2021

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IN TOUCH

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

HEALTHY WORKERS

The LORD is my Light and my Salvation ... Still

A New Year Reflection on Selected Verses from Psalm 27 by Rev. Dr. Robert E. Kasper

My farmer father had a saying: “No matter where you go, there you are.” That phrase has echoed in my head, and often in my heart, at critical turning points in my life. It sounds rather dull and simple on the surface, but more than 35 years after my dad’s death, I can still hear his voice like a prophet calling me back to reality and

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IN TOUCH

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Official Periodical of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
January 2021, Volume 20, No. 1
ISSN: 1538-8115 (print)
ISSN: 2331-8619 (online)

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spiritual focus. (As an aside, my dad had a lot of sayings that may or may not be appropriate for publication!)

A “prophetic call back to reality and spiritual focus” is certainly what we need as we enter into a New Year.

I have always been “future oriented,” musing about whether or not I am where I am supposed to be at any given moment, or might the future be better served by my being somewhere else or doing something differently. Maybe you have too. To be sure, such a future orientation has been beneficial in ministry and in life, generally, as it creates a hope-filled anticipation and challenges the status quo, refusing to get stuck in the mud of the mundane. Such a pull forward also enables us to press through immediate anxiety as it spreads out the present pressure with the promise of relief at some future point. (Jesus will come again, and all will be made right!)

However, the downside of a “future orientation,” if left unchecked, is that a person is never settled ... never still ... never satisfied ... never completely PRESENT and in the moment ... and runs the risk of not learning important lessons from the PAST. It is in these moments that my paternal prophet speaks: “No matter where you go, there you are.”

It was his way of reminding me that I always have to take myself with me, no matter where I go, or when I get there. All my baggage, my bumbling and fumbling, my sins and my shortcomings, my weaknesses and waywardness, my strengths and stupidity ... all of it comes along for the ride unless I intentionally learn from the PAST and embrace the PRESENT whole-heartedly.

Quite frankly, this is true for all of us: Whether we are stuck in the past or enamored by the future, our call is to serve Him who is the “I AM” ... present tense! And our God is so gracious and generous with us! He knows our hearts. His Spirit points us again to Jesus and assures us of His rich forgiveness right here, right now. It is a forgiveness that was purchased in the past and will hold us secure into the future. The cross of Jesus looms large and spans all time and covers all my foolishness ... and yours.

Therefore, as we migrate into 2021, let me draw your attention to Psalm 27. It is a rich Psalm of confident faith as the Holy Spirit through King David gives voice to our hearts’ present predicament.

Encouragement and Focus

The turning of the calendar will not remove the COVID-19 pandemic; and newly elected government leaders, from the president to local officials, will not eradicate social injustice and economic volatility. (It’s simply going to take God’s grace and provision at work through people.) And as we journey into 2021 we, each and all, will need to take ourselves with us because “no matter where you go, there you are.” It’s right here that the Psalmist speaks words of encouragement and hope to settle our souls, harness our anxious hearts, and focus our meandering minds:

“The LORD is my light and my salvation.

Whom (or what) shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life.

Of whom (or what) shall I be afraid?” (verse 1)

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“Whether we are stuck in the *past* or enamored by the *future*, our call is to serve Him who is the “I AM” ... *present tense!*”



God is *Bigger* than the Boogie Man

by Lynne Gatz

This past March, I planned to spend my Spring Break at my parents' home in Jackson. A "staycation" sounded wonderful. (Living alone, I had felt very isolated in my little apartment in Manistee and needed to spend time with my immediate family.) What I didn't know was that I would be there for over two months. It was the beginning of the "Stay Home, Stay Safe," mandate.

We all want to be safe. There is an "invisible enemy" within our world today. The condition of the world has changed so very quickly. As a preschool teacher, I notice that my young students often fret over things that adults may view as silly. Loud or sudden noises tend to bother them. The title of this article comes from a Veggie Tales™ song. The "Boogie Man" is a pseudonym for our fears. Children are not always able to distinguish the two. God is greater and bigger than any of our fears. When anxieties or fear make their way to my conscious mind, I remind myself of my Confirmation verse, *"The Lord is my light and salvation, whom should I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom should I be afraid?"* (Psalm 27:1).

As a retired LCMS pastor, my dad (Pastor Bill Gatz) has always stressed the value of regular worship throughout our lives. This year, on Easter Sunday, my parents and I watched four different online church services. Wow! What a blessing to hear so many different messages of faith during such uncertain times. Over the years, our family has considered several congre-

gations home and we still feel a sense of belonging to them. How amazing that we were able enter those sanctuaries again and worship with long-time friends.

During my staycation at my parents, I needed a book to read. My favorite genres of literature are biographies and autobiographies because I love learning about notable people and successful leaders. Since I couldn't visit the public library, I pondered over my dad's collection of books until I found an author I recognized. I began reading *A Man Spoke, a World Listened*, written by my campus pastor at Western Michigan University. Dr. Paul Maier wrote a loving, insightful account of his family history, and specifically how his father founded the Lutheran Hour in 1930. Rev. Dr. Walter Maier was an inspiring spiritual leader and a trailblazer as he brought "Christ to the nations." He helped create KFUE radio station and launched the Lutheran Hour radio program. He was a true pioneer and created a new genre in radio. In a sense he created his own mission field and sowed the seeds for generations to come.

At the same time that I was reading Dr. Paul Maier's book, I could see parallels between the innovation of KFUE and the emergence of online worship nationwide. Family friends in small-town Wisconsin, southern Ontario and little Manistee, Mich. were now recording or livestreaming their services. Just as the Lord empowered

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Love Your Neighbors

by Craig Britton and Kimber Walsh

God started laying the groundwork for an event to serve the Jackson community well before I [Kimber] even knew I'd be living in Jackson, Mich., when I visited a church and saw them participating in a "love your city" event with several other churches. As soon as I moved to Jackson, I began brainstorming how our congregation could love our city well. So, when the Michigan District challenged congregations to serve their community in conjunction with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I invited Trinity, the other LCMS church in our community, to brainstorm with me, and that's when our partnership to love and serve our neighbors was born.

Redeemer and Trinity joined forces to share the love of Jesus with the community in order to meet some basic needs at an annual event. We served nearly 1,000 families over three years with school supplies, socks, underwear, hygiene products, haircuts, and spiritual resources until the COVID-19 pandemic hit and we were forced to reconsider how to serve safely. Our all-indoor event, with several hundred people crowded together in a fellowship hall, needed a remodel. While we began plans for something smaller, God brought us an opportunity to continue forward in an even better way—by adding another partnership with a local non-profit. They provide food for us to do a monthly giveaway, and our churches continue to offer supplemental items and volunteers to staff the giveaway. And with this new opportunity, God has also shown us how He continues to work.

Joy. Gratitude. Humility. These three ideas are expressed in a myriad of ways toward the servants from both Redeemer and Trinity, Jackson. And we are privileged to see and hear the thanks given to our Lord as well. The

expressions are as varied as the people who drive or who sometimes even walk to receive the help and love passed on in the street before old Trinity downtown. *"Thank you, thank you. You don't know what this means,"* or *"I've really been needing some gloves and mittens for my children."* One of my favorites as I've leaned into the passenger side of a vehicle is, *"Your smile makes my days easier to walk through."* I [Craig] even tear up as I share these faces and words. Such an immense privilege it is to serve our city together anytime, but especially in these days, this season, in the name of our dear Savior.

Can you watch the Savior in the gospels kneeling, holding, healing, and declaring the Good News in so many ways and not sense the beat of His heart toward those He has made? I [Craig] suppose you can, but find Him in His Word and watch Him long enough and you just have to get in the game. At least that's our team's experience as we transport, unload, pack, and give to those in need. Perhaps it begins with "we really should do something," but the ongoing work of the Spirit of the Lord transforms the bare "should" into "we just can't help it." I remember dear Paul saying, *"Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel."* His tasks are our tasks done with the same heart, the same Savior and the same compulsion to give everything for our brothers and sisters and those we hope will join the family. We do not serve to somehow "get them in." We do what we do—and this should be true every day no matter what task He gives—to put Him on display. He's promised to build the family. We're just there to say, *"You're welcome."* ■

Craig Britton, Director of Ministries, and Kimber Walsh, Director of Family Life Ministry both serve Redeemer Lutheran Church, Jackson, Michigan.

“And with this new opportunity,
God has also shown us how
He continues to work.”



Photo by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS

Trying Times for Franklin Avenue Mission

by Jeff Heisner

Henry Williams is numb. *“Nothing tastes good, nothing is funny, nothing is fun.”* Williams just lost his 3-year-old son, Messiah, to a drive-by shooting at his home near Franklin Avenue Mission in Flint. The shooting capped off a week of unrest that also included a man getting stabbed and a number of houses that were set on fire in Flint’s eastside.

Messiah was excited about Halloween, where he was going to dress up as Baby Yoda. Now his family is remembering him with Baby Yoda pictures throughout the house. Messiah’s grandfather David Hurley said, *“He’s missed dearly, I’ll say his name every day for the rest of my life.”*

The heartache continues throughout the community and at the mission, which has also lost members to the house fires. Rev. Christian Jones of Franklin Avenue Mission puts it clearly: *“When we talk about people getting stabbed, when we talk about members losing their homes to fire bombings, but especially when we talk about little kids getting shot and killed and about gang crime and gunfire—this is demonic oppression.”*

Every Sunday the church prays for peace and comfort for the community. FAM elder Michael Spight said, *“We got to have faith in God. It’s in God’s hands that everything is going to be alright.”*

Rev. Christian Jones wants the people in this community to remember that there is still hope: *“We share the Gospel of Jesus, which is the hope, which is the light that no darkness can overcome.”*

Franklin Avenue Mission and other urban ministries like it are supported by donations to the Innovative Missional Ministry emphasis of the Michigan District’s **Here We Stand** Campaign (herewestand.michigandistrict.org). To volunteer, go to michigandistrict.org/joinaministry. To learn more about Franklin Avenue Mission, visit franklinavemission.com. ■

Jeff Heisner is the video journalist and digital media director for the Michigan District, LCMS.

“We share the *Gospel of Jesus*, which is the *hope*, which is the *light* that no darkness can overcome.”



Khumalo Farewell

by Elisa Schulz

On Sunday and Monday, December 6 and 7, Our Savior, Lansing held a farewell recognition for Rev. Mandla J. Khumalo, who has served as a Missionary to the USA from South Africa since early 2019, and his family. Pastor Khumalo, his wife, Lindiwe, and their grandson Nhlakanipho (“NK”) found a church home at Our Savior for the duration of their stay in the US (see related story at michigandistrict.org/khumalowelcome). NK attended Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade at Our Savior’s school, and Lindiwe was active in the LWML, as a school office volunteer, small group ministry, and women’s ministry.

Rev. William Wangelin, pastor of Our Savior, shares a story that highlights Pastor Khumalo’s direct approach to sharing the Gospel: In the first few days of their time in Lansing, the Khumalos visited a local grocery store. Khumalo overheard a woman talking on her phone—in Zulu. This, of course, caused Khumalo to strike up a conversation with the woman, and he invited her to church. On the first Sunday that he preached at Our Savior, there was the woman he had met in the grocery store!

According to Wangelin, *“You can’t help but smile when meeting this man of God, and to be stirred by his story of transformation by the power of the Spirit. His booming voice resonates with a passion and urgency for sharing Christ with each and every person within our reach.”* Michigan District President Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, a longtime friend of Khumalo, calls him *“the embodiment of reconciliation between God and man, an ambassador for Christ, a peace maker, and a bold proclaimer of the Gospel.”*

President Maier adds: *“During his two years in Michigan, he prolifically shared the Good News of Christ crucified and risen with mission fire, fervor, and zeal in many of our churches, grade schools and High Schools”* (see related story at michigandistrict.org/impactinglives). *“He was present in the United States for the July, 2019 Synodical Convention in Tampa, FL, when the Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa—the denomination he started and of which he is Bishop—was given full Altar and Pulpit fellowship with the LCMS... something he had prayed for since his formal seminary education at Concordia Theological Seminary, in Fort Wayne, Ind. in the late 1980’s.”*

One of the congregations visited by Khumalo was St. John’s in St. Johns. Church administrator Becky DeWitt shares, *“Pastor Khumalo came to our church June 23, 2019, to kick off our 150th Anniversary Celebration. It was a great honor to have him here. His sermon was both energetic and uplifting. But more than that, Pastor*



Pastor Wangelin presents a gift from Our Savior to St. Peter’s Confessional Lutheran Church: a stained-glass window of St. Augustine.

Khumalo’s words wove a thread reminding us to always consider ‘the truly great things God has done.’ We were encouraged to remember that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, to be thankful that we experience the great things God does for us each and every day, and that our duty is to take that forward, telling all about Jesus and the wondrous work of God. Pastor Khumalo is a great inspiration; a man we hold in high esteem. We wish him all the best as he and his family travel back to their homeland.”

Khumalo also visited Immanuel, Grand Rapids. Pastor Craig Bickel says, *“Immanuel has had Pastor Khumalo share the love of Christ with us on two Sundays. He has also been a blessing encouraging and supporting our Central Africa French Fellowship. Having him support our work of ‘making disciples of all nations’ has been a great blessing. We will miss his service in Grand Rapids.”*

Rev. Steve Schilke of Zion, Bay City, also comments on the positive experience he and his congregation had with Khumalo: *“He is an inspirational speaker and had a very heart-warming delivery. I had many positive comments from Zion members. God bless our church for men and women like the Khumalos and their ministry.”*

Although Covid 19 greatly hampered his travels and opportunities for widespread ministry as planned in the United States, he prayerfully concentrated his efforts in the Lansing area, serving regularly at Living Word Lutheran Church for their African services on Sunday afternoon, preaching and working with Vicar Moses Dangba and the Sudanese and Congolese members. He also initiated several meetings with Lansing area pastors to discuss how they can better serve this African immigrant community.

Rev. Wangelin shares, *“I have seen Pastor Khumalo bring a great enthusiasm and joy to ministry, especially among our African members. He has helped us celebrate the full diversity of the people of God and shown*

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January 2021

Plan Your Christian Legacy—for Family and Favorite Ministries—with Free Guidance



"Gift planning isn't only for seniors," says Julie Burgess, the Michigan District's Gift Planning Counselor. "In fact, it's never too early to begin planning your Christian gifts. We've even worked with young couples looking ahead upon their children's birth."



"My role is to serve as the guide. I'm at the church member's side at every step of the way. We plan together, and pray together. I advocate and provide support."

Julie Burgess
Gift Planning Counselor
Michigan District

Are you looking ahead to the financial legacy you'll leave when the Lord calls you to your heavenly home? Do you want your estate to help provide for your family after your passing? Do you want your estate to support your favorite ministries, like your church or CEF?

If yes, it's time you meet Julie Burgess, our new Gift Planning Counselor (GPC) for the Michigan District. Last April, Julie succeeded Bill Burmeister, who is now Church Extension Fund's Director of Congregational Services after helping Michigan congregations and church members with gift planning for over 10 years.

Upon Bill's move, CEF partnered with the LCMS Foundation in St. Louis to bring Julie on board. She's one of 15 regional GPCs nationwide.

Recently, the Spotlight caught up with Julie to learn how she serves church members, and how this helps build God's Kingdom. Here are highlights from the interview:

Julie, please give us a snapshot of the background you bring to your new role.

"I'm from a small town in southern Illinois. I met my husband Bob while we studied at Concordia University Chicago. Bob and I became educators, and for 30 years, we've

gone wherever Lutheran schools have needed us. I taught everything from pre-school to 6th grade, and led children's and family life ministries. We moved with our own children from New Orleans to Illinois to Houston to Michigan to Phoenix and then back to Houston before Bob became principal of St. Paul Lutheran School in Ann Arbor in 2015."

From Lutheran schools to Christian gift planning – how did you make the transition?

"For my first three months as GPC, I trained with the Foundation in gift planning. Having previously earned a license in securities trading, I was ready for the flood of new information. I already knew the lingo. Due to the pandemic, I needed to train virtually, from home. This was a first for the Foundation, but I can tell you—they flat-out aced it. The Foundation has become so renowned for their training in gift planning that all kinds of organizations, not just Lutheran ministries, sign up to take it."

As GPC, you've clearly hit the ground running. Tell us what you do from day to day.

"For three or four days of a typical workweek, I meet with congregations and individual church members about gift planning. I help church leaders set up endowments and foundations so they can receive gifts effectively. I've also advised on capital campaigns and other giving programs. We conduct many presentations, both live and virtual, both to church leaders and to church members. When members want to meet, we focus on determining their best assets to give and their best methods for giving."



Since becoming the Michigan District's Gift Planning Counselor last April, Julie Burgess has helped church members make plans to ensure their families will be well taken care of after they've passed, while also blessing their favorite Christian ministries with gifts.

How should members expect to work with you on gift planning? What's the process?

"There are four basic steps. First is **Discovery**, in which we understand how the member has been financially blessed, and identify their stewardship goals for these blessings. Next is **Design**, where we explore giving options and assess alternatives. Then we draft a **Summary** of the estate plan for the attorney and other advisors to review. Last is **Implementation**. Here we help put the plan into action. The whole process usually takes from three to six months. Sometimes a bit longer."

What choices for carrying out the giving plan do you share with church members?

"Many! Options include charitable trusts, gift annuities, and donor advised funds. We'll also review other gift planning tools like wills, living trusts, and credit shelter trusts."

How are you distinct from an estate planner or a financial planner in this process?

"I'm not an attorney, so I don't actually produce the estate plan. And I'm not a financial planner, so I don't handle the investments. My role is to serve as the guide. I'm at the church member's side at every step of the way. We plan together, and pray together. I advocate and provide support throughout the process. I'm the extra set of eyes to ensure that every "t" is crossed and every "i" is dotted exactly as the church member intends."

What key benefit does the church member get from your gift planning services?

"Mainly it's peace of mind. We know we've accomplished our mission when the church member is at peace with their decisions, knowing that their family and favorite ministries like their church or CEF, will be provided for in just the ways that God wants. Plus, there's no cost for my services. They're free!"

Want to explore your gift planning options with Julie Burgess?

Call her at 713-822-5284

Or email Julie.Burgess@lfind.org



Church Extension Fund

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A photograph of three students in a classroom setting. A woman with dark hair is in the foreground, looking down. Behind her, a blonde woman is smiling and looking at the same point. To the right, a man with glasses and a red shirt is looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing other students and classroom elements.

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Here We Stand Campaign Begins Final Year

by Ray Zavada

As hard as it is to believe, in January the **Here We Stand (HWS)** campaign begins its final year. This highly successful initiative of the Michigan District, LCMS is now a mere twelve months away from ending. As Campaign Director throughout the planning and implementation of the campaign, there is a certain level of sadness in knowing the end is approaching, while at the same time I am ecstatic about the impact the campaign has made and is continuing to make.

HWS has indeed been a successful journey. From providing annual scholarships to future Professional Church Workers attending a Concordia University System School or Seminary, to the literally hundreds of thousands of dollars being invested in Michigan District-wide Innovative Missional Ministries, to the annual support provided to missionaries from District congregations who are deployed throughout the world, as well as significant investment in the mission and ministries of St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Middelberg, South Africa, **HWS** has certainly made a huge impact on current and future Gospel proclamation in Michigan and around the world.

We at the Michigan District office praise God and thank you for allowing **HWS** to be the successful undertaking that it is. Without the faithful and generous support of the churches and individual members of our District congregations, this level of impact would not be occurring.

So now what? If **HWS** were to end today, we could say

it was a great success. And keep in mind, I have not even mentioned the Bible reading program joined in by thousands, or the 500th Anniversary Worship Service at the Breslin Center in East Lansing attended by some 13,000, or the over \$1 million added to our Endowment Fund. Yes, the campaign has been a wonderful and successful undertaking that has allowed much to take place for the sake of the Kingdom.

But we have another year to make **HWS** even more successful and have an even greater impact than it already has. Another year of opportunity is before us.

As we go through these final twelve months of **HWS**, I invite you to prayerfully consider how you and/or your congregation can become a participant if you have not already, or consider participating again if you have already.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me, or Linda Ekong, if you have any questions.

"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" (Psalm 71:17-18).

For more information about the campaign or to make a donation please visit: herewestand.michigandistrict.org. To make a gift by phone you can call Linda Ekong at 734.665.3791 ext 265.

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

(through December 4, 2020)

\$7,144,205.30	Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$6,915,924.60	Cash received which includes \$600,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$171,600.48	Outstanding commitments (pledges)
\$1,360,405.17	Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$3,071,103.62	Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$1,035,407.61	Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$1,620,608.67	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

Shining the Light of Christ into the Middle East

The Middle East and North Africa have the youngest population in the world, many of whom feel hopeless because of political turmoil, social instability, and high unemployment. When you factor in the ongoing effects of a global pandemic, the hopelessness for many in the region only continues to grow.

A new television series produced through Lutheran Hour Ministries' ongoing partnership with SAT-7, the first and largest Middle East and North African Christian satellite television network, is shining the light of Christ into the lives of these hurting people at a time when they need to hear this message more than ever. The program, titled New Light, debuted Nov. 20 and will air four times weekly on SAT-7's Arabic channel. This satellite television program has the potential of reaching tens of millions of viewers in more than 20 countries spanning from as far west as Morocco to as far east as Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

The new program is a 55-minute talk show that highlights a different topic or brings a different perspective to current affairs and matters affecting the target audience of viewers ages 17 to 30. Each episode includes multiple segments covering in-studio and on-the-street interviews with guests sharing opinions on the program topic as well as their

motivating stories, musical guests or pre-recorded songs, spiritual devotions pre-recorded from an off-site location, and much more. Some of the scheduled topics include the influence of mass media, types of addiction, freedom and responsibility, family values, marriage, recognizing and managing emotions, handling disappointment, and coping with pain and loss.

Given this demographics' preference for online media, the use of multiple segments allows material created for this television program to be utilized and promoted in multiple ways through social media platforms. The program's young co-hosts walk the viewers through the segments and encourage in-depth discussion on the topic.

"We pray this programming brings God's love and mercy to millions of young Arab viewers who are suffering and questioning their faith and place in society," says LHM President & CEO Kurt Buchholz. *"Hearing about God and how He loves them and gives them hope for the future, from the privacy of their own homes, may be the only opportunity for many of these young adults to hear this message at all."*

For more information about this program and other Lutheran Hour Ministries resources, visit lhm.org.

Heart Issues are **Hard Issues**



A Bible Study on Racial Healing in the Church and for the Community

This study will include:

- The Heart Issues Video Series
- Adult/small group Bible study materials
- Discussion questions

AVAILABLE
February 2021

michigandistrict.org/resources

Michigan District Pastor Participating in the Coronavirus Vaccine Trials

by Jeff Heisner

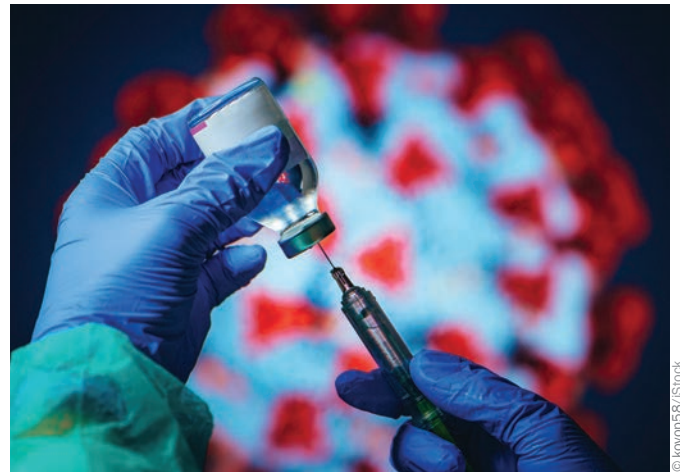
In a community that has been hit hard by the Coronavirus, one of our Michigan District, LCMS pastors is hoping to help save lives by taking the road less traveled.

Rev. Dr. Evan Gaertner, Senior Pastor of Our Shepherd, Birmingham has seen how the virus has affected so many communities in Southeast Michigan and wanted to make a difference. He signed up at the beginning of October to be part of the Coronavirus vaccine study, but he heard nothing at first. No one called back or emailed for a full month, so he tried again. The second time around, he got a call back immediately. Beaumont Health was doing research in the Detroit area and they brought him on board.

Gaertner got his first shot on Monday, November 16 and recalled, *“the first two days after getting the shot I was tired, had a slight headache, predictable soreness in my arm, and some body ache around my neck and shoulders.”*

AstraZeneca is the company supplying the vaccine. Two-third of the patients get the actual vaccine, while the other third gets a placebo. Gaertner doesn't know whether he was given the vaccine or a placebo but, after experiencing the side effects of the first shot, he thinks it was likely the vaccine.

The study is still in the early stages and is expected to



last two years. Gaertner will receive a total of two shots during the trial. Doctors will monitor him throughout the process through blood tests, and he also fills out a diary of his experience on a phone app to make it easy to communicate with the researchers.

He knows there are risks involved, but said, *“I wanted to do this because I want the vaccines to be successful. I know that clinical trials are necessary to understand the effectiveness of the vaccines.”*

Gaertner is putting his trust in the Lord throughout this process and said, *“so far it has been a positive experience.”*

The LORD is my Light continued from page 2

So our deliverance is from outside of ourselves and outside of human effort. Then David adds:

*“One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days
of my life...
...he will keep me safe in His dwelling;
He will hide me in the shelter of His Tabernacle
And set me high upon a rock.” (verses 4,5)*

I cannot help but to reflect on the fact that John 1:14 (John’s Christmas account) states, *“The Word became flesh and ‘tabernacle(d)’ among us, full of grace and truth.”* What’s more, St. Paul reminds us that through faith *“(we) died and (our) life is now hidden with Christ in God!”* We are safely hidden in the “tabernacle” that is Jesus, our Savior!

Therefore, we can confidently go into 2021, learning lessons from the PAST and holding hope in God’s faithfulness in the FUTURE, while seeking to be fully and wholeheartedly PRESENT to live faithfully and serve our neighbor in the name of Jesus. And we, with Spirit-worked faith, can sing with the Psalmist:

*“I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and take heart,
And wait for the LORD.” (verses 13,14)*

So it’s true: “no matter where you go, there you are.” But more gloriously true is this: “No matter where you go, Jesus goes with you.” Isn’t that some Good News?! ■

Rev. Dr. Robert E. Kasper is the Assistant to the President - Congregation Ministry Facilitator Metro Zone and Ministry Support for the Michigan District, LCMS.



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God is Bigger continued from page 3

Dr. Walter A. Maier, he can just as easily equip us to impact our own individual mission field. *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37).* I am not a commissioned worker, but I love teaching in a Lutheran preschool and feel a “calling” to my occupation. I love teaching kids to pray and sharing the love of Jesus with my young students. It was wonderful to reunite with the kids this fall and we’re enjoying our school year.

As the stay-at-home order was lifted, I returned to my home in Manistee. I still hadn’t finished Paul Maier’s book, which was over four hundred pages long. Sitting on the beach reading, I was suddenly in shock at what I had just read. I had invested months reading this inspiring biography and suddenly read that Dr. Walter A. Maier had died at the young age of fifty-six. It was so sad. I even called my parents that evening and asked why they didn’t warn me. Maybe I was overly sensitive or emotional from being isolated for so long, but I was in a state of mourning. Some things are just so hard to understand *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).* We don’t know what the future holds, but we know who holds our future. We need to stay strong and reject the victim-mentality so common this past year. Look at the blessings from 2020 and not the burdens. *“I have told you these things so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).*

The world is changing and we must change with it. The pandemic we are living through is real, but the “Boogie Man” is not. God is always bigger than our fears and frustrations. Always. ■

Lynne Gatz is the Preschool Director/Lead Teacher at Trinity Lutheran Preschool in Manistee, Mich.



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Khumalo Farewell continued from page 7

us what it means to be a church of all nations.”

On the effect Khumalo has had on the congregation at Our Savior, Wangelin says: “Pastor Khumalo’s preaching and testimony are powerful and motivating us for greater Gospel outreach. He has helped us focus on the Great Commission with a renewed focus and greater enthusiasm, as we reach out to all nations and share the Good News of Jesus.”

Rev. Todd Biermann of Faith, Grand Blanc, shares: “I will never forget Mandla’s exuberance in the pulpit. While I was preaching in his home pulpit in Middleburg, he was preaching in my pulpit back in Grand Blanc. I called to greet Mandla and my congregation later in the afternoon South African time, only to learn that he had just BROKEN my pulpit with his powerful pounding. How rude! He still owes me ;) Keep preaching with the same zeal always, dear brother, and I will be paid in full!”

As the Khumalos’ stay came to a close, the Our Savior church family gathered in person and online to hear Khumalo preach one last time (you can watch it at michigandistrict.org/khumalofarewell). Khumalo’s sermon followed a simple outline based on Isaiah 9:6:

Jesus was wonderful in His birth.

He was wonderful in His growth.



© Elisa Schulz, Michigan District, LCMS

He was wonderful in His death AND resurrection.

According to President Maier, who was also present at the service, “If someone had never heard the Gospel, or wondered what Christianity was all about, [Khumalo] verbally and visually clearly confessed the one true Christian faith for all to know.”

The congregation also gave a gift to St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa: a stained glass window that had been in storage since Our Savior’s new sanctuary was built. The window depicts St. Augustine, a North African Bishop from the early church who happens to be a favorite of Khumalo’s and after whom his grandson, NK, received his middle name. Our Savior also arranged for shipping so that the window can make it to its final destination in Middelburg.

“Let us join together in continuing to pray for Bishop Khumalo as he and his family return to South Africa. May his ministry efforts there again be greatly blessed. May the churches here in Michigan that have a deep relationship with Khumalo continue in those relationships under the guiding hand of a loving God! May we all continue to pray to be bold witnesses of our truly Wonderful God until we meet again,” encourages Maier. ■

Elisa Schulz is the staff writer, copy editor, and photographer for the Michigan District, LCMS.

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Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Mark Wuggazer (Macomb) to St. John, Cypress, TX

Change of Status

Rev. Roger Mackie (Rockford) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Rev. Dr. Paul Philp (Traverse City) from Missouri District

Called Home

Rev. Adolph Pankratz (Stevensville)

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Alexander, Jason (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to ISJ Academy, Grand Rapids

Stathakis, Carol (Peace, Shelby Township) to Our Shepherd, Birmingham

Change of Status

Lockhart, Susan (Trinity, Utica) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Opel, Edgar (Emeritus) to Rocky Mountain District

Paluch, Beth (Emeritus) to Indiana District

Zielke, Adolph (Emeritus) to Northern Illinois District

Called Home

Kaiser, Roy

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

Calendar of Events

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

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

- 17 Ash Wednesday
- 27 Deadline for Convention nominations, reports, and overtures

MARCH 2021

- 16 Board of Directors' Meeting
Location TBD

APRIL 2021

- 1 Maundy Thursday
- 2 Good Friday
- 4 Easter Sunday
- 16–17 The Katie - Virtual Conference

MAY 2021

- TBD North & East Pastors' Virtual Conference
- 8 Michigan District Convention Floor Committees
District Office, Ann Arbor
- TBD South & East Pastors' Virtual Conference
- 12–13 Circuit Visitors' Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- TBD West Pastors' Virtual Conference
- 25 Board of Directors' Meeting
Location TBD
- 26–27 Intentional Interim Spring Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

District Office Notice

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

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