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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 Harvest Still Plentiful ... The Workers Still Few

by Robert E. Kasper

It was a brisk, dry, and sun drenched morning—as good as it gets in Michigan’s winter—when Pastor Shipley rolled into the parking lot of St. John’s Lutheran Church. It was the first Tuesday of the month and he had traveled to this sister congregation for the monthly circuit pastors’ gathering. Shipley normally enjoyed getting together with his fellow pastors in the area because there was usually a good exchange of thoughts and ideas as they engaged the Word of God,

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IN TOUCH

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

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

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

888.225.2111
intouch@michigandistrict.org
michigandistrict.org

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discussed pastoral practice, and prayed for one another. What's more, there were usually more than a few good laughs, especially if Pastor Tom Dillon was there. (There's always one guy in any group ...)

However, today Shipley was attending the meeting out of duty. As he put the car in PARK, grabbed his Bible, donned his face mask, and crawled out of the car, his mind was racing with the dozens of things he needed to get accomplished. Shut-in and hospital visits, worship/ Bible study/sermon preparation, follow-up with recent visitors in worship, prepare a devotion for Board Night, all mashed into his consciousness at the same time, along with the emotional punch of realizing he needed to also prepare for Mr. Sim's funeral on Thursday and the Wilson/Rogers wedding on Saturday; and all of it with COVID -19 restrictions and considerations in mind. That list was just for his call as Pastor. Shipley also understood his call to be a husband and father. He tried to dismiss it as "just one week of crazy," but he knew it was more normal than odd. He needed to be two people ... at least!

"Shipley!" The deep baritone voice bellowing across the meeting room, barely muffled by a mask, could be none other than Pastor Tom Dillon's. "I've got someone here you have to meet," he continued in the same breath and volume.

"This is Ryan, and he's my new partner in ministry," Tom said excitedly as he dragged this 30-something man by the elbow from the coffee urn to the front of the room. Shipley noticed that Ryan still had a mouthful of donut jammed in his cheek and, with the help of Dillon, had managed to spill hot coffee on his wrist creating a grimace behind his cheery smile. They greeted with a fist bump as Ryan offered his donut-ed hand.

"Wow! It's great to meet you, Ryan," Shipley said, then turned to Pastor Dillon with a questioning look, requesting an explanation.

"Yeah, Ryan has been a member at Trinity for a couple years, now," responded Tom. "He's originally from the Chicago area, but moved here for his work. He and his wife Kristin have become very active in our congregation. I noticed how interested they were to build friendships and to connect with people both in worship and in Bible class. He has asked some great questions and offered some wonderful insights during our Sunday morning classes."

"So, how is it that now you're this crazy pastor's 'partner in ministry'?" Shipley asked, looking at Ryan who swallowed hard on the donut with a sip of coffee.

"Well," began Ryan, "This 'crazy pastor' as you call him invited me out for lunch. During that lunch, he shared with me that he'd been 'praying to the LORD of the harvest' for another worker in the harvest field around Trinity. He said that my name kept showing up on his short list of potential workers. Pastor Dillon has also taken two other guys out for lunch. One is a retired factory worker and one is a business owner. All three of us are being trained as his 'partners in ministry.' As for me, my wife Kristin and I live in a large apartment complex, and Pastor Dillon has been trying to reach out with the Gospel to the hundreds of individuals and families that live there. So, he's asked me and the other guys to get some training through the Michigan District to become Deacons. I'll be serving as an evangelist and hopefully start a Bible study or a house church among the residents of our complex. In addition, I'll help out with shut-ins and hospital visitation."

Shipley was impressed with the idea, but needed to ask more questions to really understand.

“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

Matthew 9:37–38

“So, are you quitting your job?”

“Oh, no,” Ryan immediately shot back. “I’m taking coursework online through the Michigan District’s new Michigan School of Missional Formation, through Sioux Falls Seminary. It’s all online and I can work at my own pace while continuing to keep my job to pay the bills and also live into my calling as a worker in God’s harvest field!”

Pastor Shipley could see the excitement on Ryan’s face and hear it in his voice. He broke in with another question. *“So, you’re going to work part-time with Pastor Dillon in addition to your day job ... and take classes?”*

“Yeah, sort of,” Ryan responded, trying to frame a fuller response. “You see, in this process, I’m actually using my work with Pastor Dillon as part of my coursework assignments. It’s really great to try to apply what I’m learning from the recorded lectures and reading assignments to the ministry God is calling me into through Trinity. What’s also great is that all the instructors are LCMS guys who have been teaching in the Michigan District’s Deacon Training Program in the past, so even though we’re using the platform from Sioux Falls Seminary, it’s uniquely from our Lutheran theological perspective.”

Pastor Shipley was becoming more intrigued by the concept and its potential to raise up more “workers for the harvest field.” He was compelled to ask another question. *“So, Dillon just takes you to lunch and throws this idea at you and now you’re working a full-time job, going to school, and working with him? Is Trinity paying you?”*

Ryan gave out a little chuckle and a wry smile as he glanced at Pastor Dillon. *“No, I’m not getting any money from Trinity, technically. Because Pastor Dillon and the congregation have asked me to enter into this little ‘evangelistic endeavor’ in a more formal way and get this training, the congregation has agreed to pay for most of the \$300 per month tuition. I’ve got some skin in the game*

too. But I should be able to get through the training and finish my Master Assessments in 13-15 months if I stay at it. At the end, if I’m successful, I’ll have a Master of Arts in Missional Formation. I’ll also have compiled a very large portfolio of my work should the congregation ask me to continue my training and become ordained as a Specialized Ministry Pastor (SMP) through one of our seminaries. Or, God may lead me to go the full route and get an M. Div. later. Either way, I’m learning a ton through the process and still engaged in hands-on ministry. For example, one of my assignments was to develop a team to identify a community need, plan a way to meet it, and carry it out. That was fun! I’m not doing it so I get paid. My biggest goal is to join Jesus in the harvest field and be the best worker I can be.” Then he grinned and added, *“Plus the goal that Kristin and I have of becoming parents!”*

“That’s great,” responded Pastor Shipley. Then he added, “Well, welcome to the group! I hope we get to know each other better. And know that this group will be praying for you and your efforts in the harvest. We’ll also pray for you because you have to work with this crazy guy!” Shipley threw a knowing glance at Tom who responded with a laugh and a shoulder punch.

Driving away from the meeting that Tuesday, Pastor Shipley reviewed the conversation with Ryan and Pastor Dillon. With all he had on his plate, he knew he could use some extra “workers in the harvest field”. He committed to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead him to some leaders in his congregation who might prayerfully consider training through the Michigan School of Missional Formation. He knew there was so much more that could be done if there were more well-trained servant-leaders. It was true of his congregation ... and it was true for the whole Church. ■

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

Michigan School of Missional Formation

The Michigan School of Missional Formation, formerly known as the Deacon/Pre-SMP, & Ministry Assistant Training Program, is an accredited Master of Arts degree in association with Sioux Falls Seminary that provides thorough and ongoing theological training from an LCMS perspective for laity to serve more effectively in congregational ministry under the supervision of an Ordained Pastor. The program also provides initial theological training for laymen preparing to enter the LCMS Specific Ministry Pastor track toward ordination. For more information, visit michigandistrict.org/missional.

Fighting Human Trafficking with *Love*, One Person at a Time



Top: Deb Ellinger (L) with Roxanne (Center) and a volunteer.

Bottom: Deb with an outreach team.



Photos courtesy of Elli's House

Deb hands out food, hygiene items, and clothing.

In January Michigan District, LCMS video journalist Jeff Heisner talked with Deb Ellinger, founder of Elli's House, about the ministry that cares for women who are victims of human trafficking. You can listen to the podcast at michigandistrict.org. This article is a summary of the interview.

Elli's House is a non-profit serving homeless and runaway women involved in human trafficking in the city of Detroit. This Acts 2 Enterprise Innovative Missional Ministry supported by the *Here We Stand* campaign and other funding of the Michigan District, LCMS builds relationships through a street outreach, and offers safe shelter and provides education for the women who get off the streets.

The street outreach team goes out three times a week on the East side of Detroit. They hand out food, hygiene kits, clothing, and winter items to women who are in forced prostitution.

The ministry owns two houses where women can stay for up to two years, rent free. Elli's House provides mental health and medical care, life skills training and help going back to school, as well as guidance on budgeting and saving money. The goal is to get the women to be self-sufficient to live on their own.

2020 was a difficult year, but several positive things happened as well, according to Ellinger. One of them was that the ministry received the donation of a house, fully updated and move-in ready.

Another highlight of the year was the progress made by one resident, Roxanne. According to Ellinger, she has been with the ministry for almost 8 months and is doing really well: she has a job and is looking for housing; she

has also been growing in her faith and participating in Bible studies. Ellinger has a vision that Roxanne will continue to be a part of the ministry even after she moves out, possibly as a mentor.

Even though Elli's House focuses on the East side of Detroit, trafficking is happening everywhere (Ellinger mentions one ring that was found to be active in an affluent community of Oakland County, for example). Ellinger emphasizes that it is important to be aware of signs that indicate someone is being trafficked. Two of these signs are: 1) a woman who is inappropriately dressed for the winter (no coat) and carrying a plastic bag or suitcase around; 2) a woman who appears to be controlled by someone else—she can't talk or interact with anyone unless the person who accompanies her says it's OK. You can find these and other tips at Elli's House's Facebook page.

Current needs of the ministry include snack foods for outreach (at least 100 bags a week), gloves and leggings (used or new), and people to help the women with life skills, especially spending time with them in the house so they learn how to interact socially. Ellinger also says people are welcome to join them during street outreach.

If you want to learn more or get involved with this and/or other Michigan District, LCMS mercy ministries, visit michigandistrict.org and click on *Join a Ministry*. ■

ELLI'S HOUSE 2020

by the numbers

6 women got off the streets and into treatment programs

3,100 hygiene kits handed out during street outreach

120 volunteers gave us their hearts and time

one mission



Six Ways Families can Make Online Worship *Meaningful*

by Megan Schultz



The COVID-19 Pandemic, health concerns, and other matters have caused many families to move from in person to online worship. If you are one of those families, are you struggling to get everyone in your home engaged in the online worship experience? Here are some ideas to make at-home church just as meaningful and engaging for the whole family.

Light Candles

In-person church always begins with lighting the candles. Church is about to begin! Why does a family at-home worship experience have to be any different? Before tuning into church, light some candles! It could be one, or ten! Let the whole family (if age appropriate) take a turn lighting and blowing out the candles for that day's worship service. Make this experience even more special by explaining that Jesus is the light of the world, and lighting candles shows us that Jesus is present with us as we worship Him!

Make Bulletins

Bulletins are helpful for kids during church because they show what has already happened in the service and what's coming next. This schedule keeps kids from asking, "when is it gonna be over?" Does your church have bulletins online? If not, consider making your own! Most worship services follow the same order each week. It usually begins with a song, followed by confession and forgiveness of sins, Bible readings, maybe another song, the sermon, offering, Communion, and closing songs and prayers.

Make a list of what your church does and make a bulletin with your family. Use simple language the whole family can understand. Draw a box that can be checked off when that part of the service is over. Let different family members take turns checking off the boxes. This practice will keep your family engaged as they follow the order of the service.

Pick Out Clothes

Rolling over in bed and tuning into church on your phone in your pajamas is *SO* 2020, but is this the best practice for your family? Get your family out of bed and excited to gather for worship on Sundays by

giving them a Fashion Challenge! Maybe you will all wear the same colors, dress in your finest clothes, your favorite sports team's gear, or (intentionally) make it a pajama day! Watching church from home means you can get as creative or silly with your wardrobe as you want. Be sure to include different family members by letting them pick the weekly theme.

Pack a Busy Bag

Do you normally pack a bag to take to church with you? You might include snacks, some crayons, or small toys. Maybe your church even provides these "busy bags" for you as you enter the sanctuary. Just because you are at home doesn't mean kids don't get the wiggles! Being at home can actually be more distracting since bedrooms and playrooms are nearby.

Stay Focused

Help your family stay focused by doing two things. First, remove as many toys and distractions as you can from the room where you will be streaming church. Then, mindfully choose what you want to put back into the room. Your kids can help you choose small toys that don't make noise, some blocks to keep little hands busy, and a snack. You can even print off coloring sheets that correspond with the Bible readings to entertain and teach your little ones. (Visual Faith Ministries, visualfaithmin.org, offers children's bulletins and other resources based on the lectionary).

Get Active

Streaming worship services sometime results in loss of interest because it is less engaging. You're not standing, sitting, or kneeling like you do in church. Try this idea to keep your family focused on the service: Make it a game! Pick a word or phrase and every time it is said, do an action as a family. For example: every time PRAYER is said, fold your hands, every time JESUS is said, stand up and make a cross with your arms, every time PRAISE is said, jump three times. Get creative and let your family help to come up with the motions. ■

Megan Schultz is the Family Life Minister at Large for Acts 2 Enterprise in Detroit. Follow her on Facebook at Detroit Family Life Ministry.



A Time to Build

by Ryan Tinetti

Among the small blessings of being in quarantine, as my family and I were in January, is the chance to watch *The Lord of the Rings*. Each of the three films clocks in at north of three hours, and so it's not usual movie night fare. When you're cooped up with nowhere to go for days on end, though, they can be a welcome reprieve.

In *The Fellowship of the Ring* there is a powerful scene in which the wizard Gandalf admonishes Frodo, who is lamenting the hand that fate has dealt him.

"I wish the ring had never come to me," the hobbit says. "I wish none of this had happened."

To which Gandalf responds: "So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."

Quarantine notwithstanding, Gandalf's counsel is an altogether welcome and necessary word right now. For we are undoubtedly dwelling in dark and disturbing times.

Dark Times

The events of January 6 in Washington were heinous and reprehensible. But while the nature and location of the Capitol riot made it uniquely damaging to our republic, the anger it expressed was regrettably not unique. A larger pattern of nihilism, paranoia, and despair that transcends social class, political party, race, sex—all the demographic demarcations we use to divvy people up—has cast a dark cloud, like the shadows of Mordor, over all of our society. Worse still, with so many of these unsettling forces being outside of our control, we can be left feeling helpless and hopeless. We don't know if things are going to get any better or if we can even do anything about it. And so we may well wish, like Frodo, that we didn't have to deal with such times.

Alas, it's not for us to decide. As Gandalf put it, "*All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.*" So what shall we do—in particular, as Christians, and as the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

That is of course a big question that I can hardly resolve in 500 words or maybe even 500 pages. But I would like to offer a pair of provisional responses.

“It’s not our calling to change the world, fix all society’s ills, or make America a “Christian nation.” It is our *calling* to share God’s heart in the little part of His good creation that He has planted us in ...”

1. Recognize the true nature of the crisis

Until the disease is properly diagnosed it cannot be adequately addressed. Our current crisis surely has economic, political, and social dimensions. Underlying it all, however, is a profound spiritual malady. I know I sound like a pastor here, but understand: I'm not saying this because I'm a pastor; I'm a pastor because I'm convinced of what I'm saying. I think that the poet-theologian Martin Franzmann gets it exactly right in his hymn "In Adam We Have All Been One:"

*We fled Thee, and in losing Thee
We lost our brother too;
Each singly sought and claimed his own;
Each man his brother slew (LSB 569:2).*

Franzmann succinctly expresses the indissoluble bond between our "vertical" relationship with God and our "horizontal" relationships with one another. Loss of faith begets an isolation and alienation that issues forth in selfishness and violence. And the ever-present assaults of the Evil One foment chaos and aggravate the impulses of our sinful nature.

This assessment is overly simplistic, to be sure; it's not as straightforward as "turn to God and all will be well." But unless and until we recognize the underlying spiritual roots to our contemporary crises, we'll just keep groping in the dark.

2. Build strong local Christian community

In the conclusion to philosopher Alisdair Macintyre's

MARCH 2021

CEF's New Accountant, Zack Werner, Confirms the Strength in Our Numbers



"He decreed statutes ... and established the law ... which He commanded our ancestors to teach their children ... so the next generation would know them."



Zack Werner, Church Extension Fund's new Accounting Manager, finds guidance for his work from **Psalm 78**. It's Zack's "bottom line." He says: "For over a hundred years, CEF has helped congregations build churches and schools so God's Word can be proclaimed in Michigan. We know God will be faithful for the next century as well."



*"I enjoy telling
CEF's mission
and how we serve
congregations...
we're uniquely
able to care."*

Zack Werner
Accounting Manager
Church Extension Fund

Through the years, CEF Spotlight has reported on the schools, churches, and other ministries who rely on Church Extension Fund for loans and investments. We've shown how the Holy Spirit has moved congregations to seek CEF's help in expanding their facilities and offerings. We've also covered how church members can look to CEF to plan for their financial future, and how to bless the ministries, (like CEF), that they support. Underlying each Spotlight edition has been the core message of how our work is key to helping to build God's Kingdom here in Michigan.

Yet there's a "behind the scenes" story to be told about CEF's success as well.

Have you ever wondered about the many dedicated people working in management, administrative, and support roles at CEF's headquarters in Ann Arbor? They're the people who strive each day, without fanfare, to ensure that CEF can continue to serve our Lutheran borrowers and investors, just as we have for the past 120 years.

One such CEF "doer" is Zack Werner, our new Accounting Manager. Zack joined us in August 2020, working in our

Finance department under CEF's president John Bates. From day to day, Zack maintains CEF's accounting system. He prepares deposits, runs reports, reconciles accounts, and generates financial statements.

The Spotlight recently sat down with Zack for this "getting to know you" interview. Read on and you'll see that CEF's ledgers are in good hands.

Zack, where did you work before coming to CEF?

"For four and a half years, I had the honor of serving as Director of Operations at University Lutheran Chapel, just down the road from here in Ann Arbor. I oversaw church business and communications, and led our contemporary worship services."

What did you know about CEF before you hired on?

"In my previous job, it was my pleasure to work with CEF on a number of church housing loans. I came to appreciate how well CEF worked with our congregation. It's a great relief for ministries to know that CEF is there to help with lending needs. And since CEF has such competitive products, congregations know we have their best interest at heart."

How do you answer when people ask you about CEF?

"I enjoy telling CEF's mission and how we serve congregations. From an accountant's viewpoint,



Zack Werner, CEF's newest employee, is pictured here with his wife Courtney. They met at Concordia University and now both work in serving the church. Courtney teaching Kindergarten at St. John's, Waltz and Zack as our Accounting Manager.

I can share how God has blessed this ministry with such a stable financial position."

Why did you decide to join the CEF team?

"As a Christian, being able to serve God through my vocation is very important to me. I find guidance for my work in Psalm 78. It's part of my "bottom line"; to be able to help spread the Gospel to the world so that the next generation will know God's love. Being a part of a ministry like CEF gives me a unique opportunity to use my talents and skills to serve the Lord!"

How have you found the CEF team to work with so far?

"Terrific! I've been very impressed

with the amazing talents of CEF management and staff. What a great team! It's a joy to work in this office and learn the ins and outs of CEF operations from everyone here – of every background, and of every specialty."

Outside of work? Zack, please tell us a bit about yourself.

"I'm a native Michigander and lifelong Lutheran. I met my wife Courtney while we were students at Concordia University in Ann Arbor. Courtney teaches Kindergarten at St. John's Lutheran in Waltz, Michigan, where we're church members. During our free time, we enjoy spending time with our families. I also play guitar and enjoy watching Tigers baseball."



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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Raising Up the *Next Generation* of Faithful *Christian Disciples*

Each year, LCMS schools across the nation celebrate Lutheran Schools Week (LSW). This opportunity allows more than 1,900 preschools, elementary schools, and high schools to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children. Our schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

The theme of this year's Lutheran Schools Week is "Sent to Serve" based on Matthew 20:28: "*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.*"

To celebrate LSW in the Michigan District, the video "Kids Say the Craziest Things!" was put together featuring a few of our principals and teachers. To view, go to [YouTube.com/michiganlcms](https://www.youtube.com/michiganlcms). Devotions were written by Michigan District elementary school children and published during the weeks of January 25 and March 1. To read, visit michigandistrict.org/blog. The following is a sample of what you'll find there:

Sent to Serve

2021 NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

SENT TO SERVE

Katy's dad got a new job, and Katy moved to a Lutheran School. Katy didn't know anything about Jesus, because she had never gone to church or been taught about Him. At her school she met a girl named Claire, and Claire was a Christian. Claire had decided to invite Katy's family to church that Sunday. In church Katy learned that Jesus was born in a manger, and died to take away our sins. Then on the third day He rose from the dead. Just as Jesus was sent to serve and teach people about the Word, Claire was sent to serve. We pray: Dear God, we thank you for sending your one and only Son to die on the cross for us, and that He took away our sins. Amen. – Braelin from St. Michael's in Richville.

SERVING GOD

My dad serves me. He gives me things when I need them, and he does fun things. He likes to drive around with me and do things with me.

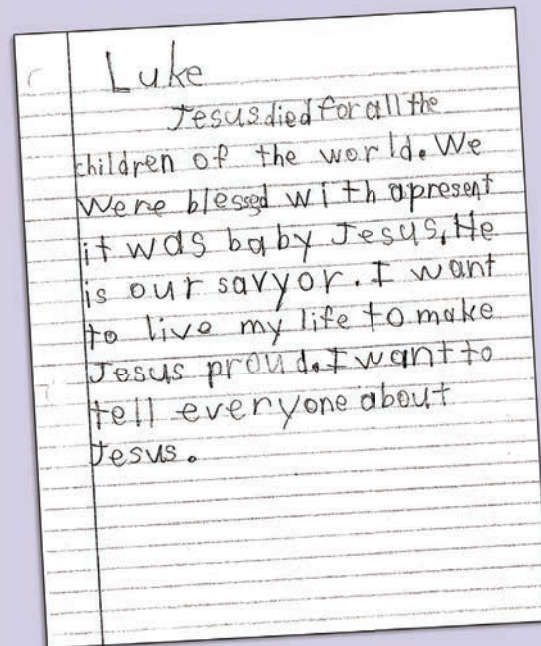
Just like my dad, Jesus does everything for us. He can do everything. He does everything for us, and He even died for us.

Here is the most important thing to remember: Jesus is our Savior. He can do anything.

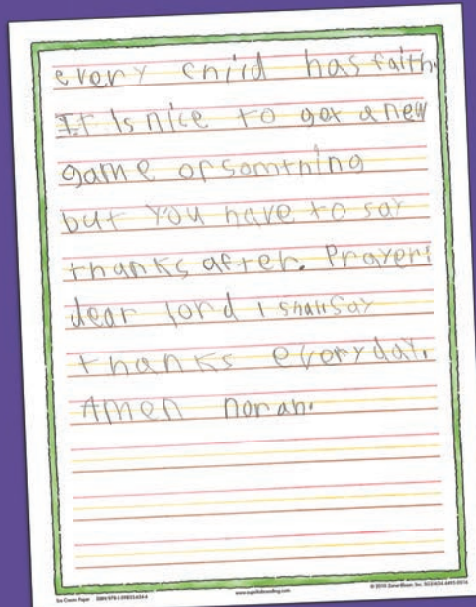
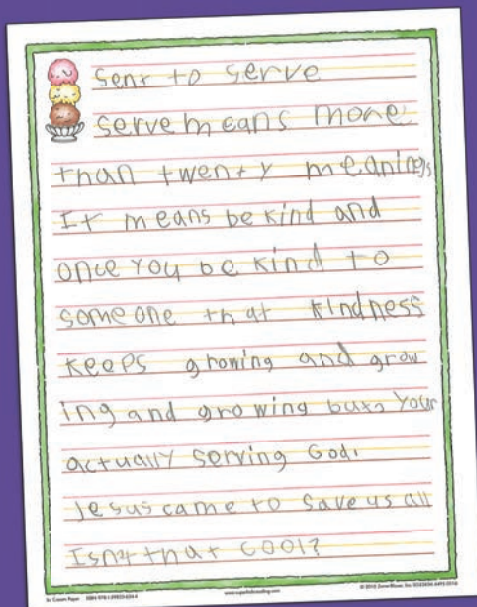
Prayer: Dear God, please help more people to believe in you. In Jesus' name, Amen. – Jack from Trinity Monitor in Bay City.

FAITH COMES FROM HEARING

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Christ the Lord is God. He saved us from our sins and if He was not here we would not be saved. It would be a grumpy world. And you should not lie because it could get someone in trouble and make them suffer from what you did. I hope this will make you have a better day. – Sarah from Trinity in Clinton Township.



Luke from St. John in Waltz



Norah from Zion in Harbor Beach

Church Extension Fund Has Impacted *Here We Stand* From the Beginning

by Ray Zavada

When the *Here We Stand* (*HWS*) campaign completes its fifth and final year of the Congregational Phase in December 2021, there will have been many congregations and individuals who have partnered with the Michigan District to make *HWS* a huge success.

Each financial partner is a blessing to the campaign, and every partner has helped the Michigan District take another step forward. I humbly appreciate and treasure the financial investment of each and every donor partner to *HWS*. However, please allow me to publicly thank one specific partner who has been with us from day one and continues to stand by *HWS* nearly five years later: the Michigan District Church Extension Fund (CEF).

The Michigan District and CEF have a very special partnership. You may already know that our two offices share the same building, although on different floors. So not only are we working daily “alongside” friends and colleagues, but we work together for a common ministry purpose—to serve members and congregations of the Michigan District.

John Bates, President of CEF, talks about our partnership in this way: *“The mission of CEF is to make resources available for members and churches of the Michigan District to carry forward the Great Commission. While CEF is known primarily for its lending program, our grant program is also an important part of our ministry. Providing a match grant incentive for the Here We Stand campaign has hopefully encouraged members to contribute to the campaign that has provided substantial funding for these important ministries. We see God at work through this campaign and are privileged to have participated with our ministry partner.”*

The match grant incentive is the commitment CEF made to match 10% of every donation made to *HWS*. To date, \$600,000 has been given to *HWS*. What a blessing! The 10% match is available through the end of the campaign.

CEF has also impacted *HWS* in other substantial ways, such as giving a \$350,000 grant prior to the onset of the campaign to cover all campaign expenses. Because of their generosity, you can be assured that every dollar given to *HWS* goes to the campaign initiative(s) each individual donor or congregation has chosen to support.

One additional way CEF has impacted the *HWS* campaign was by sponsoring the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation Worship Service at the Breslin Center in East Lansing in October 2017,

which also served as the “official” kick-off of the *HWS* campaign. Through a grant of \$100,000 CEF made it possible for us to hold the memorable worship service at no cost to the attendees.

Through the generosity CEF has faithfully extended to the *HWS* campaign, they have truly had a major impact on current and future ministry. We praise God for placing such faithful ministry partners in the Michigan District. Beginning with Ron Steinke, who was the leader of CEF when *HWS* began, to Jim Saalfeld, CEO, and John Bates, President, who provide leadership today, we thank them for their faithful and generous partnership with the Michigan District and the *HWS* campaign, plus numerous other ways they advance the work of the Church in the Michigan District.

To learn more about the *HWS* campaign, or to become a financial partner for the first time or again, please contact Linda Ekong at 734.213.4265 or Ray Zavada at 734.904.2773. You may also visit the District website at www.michigandistrict.org/herewestand.

To learn more about the ministry of CEF, please contact them directly at 800.242.3944 or visit their website at mi-cef.org.



Here We Stand

Campaign Goal: \$10 million

Campaign Progress: \$7.22 million
(as of February 1, 2021)

Participating Congregations: 166

Individual Contributors: 1,384

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

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LLL Pastoral Advisor Called Home

Rev. G. Travis Downs, pastoral advisor for the Michigan District Lutheran Laymen's League, and pastor of Trinity, Lansing, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, January 24.

Pastor Downs was a faithful servant of the Lord. He faithfully served as pastor for over 35 years in churches across our nation. He was loved and cherished by his congregations. He is remembered for his loving counseling, impactful messages, and 'yo-yo' sermons. He was also a teacher and mentor for numerous students of faith, many of whom are now pastors. His children and grandchildren were all baptized by him and he presided over one son's wedding.

Pastor Downs and his wife, Elizabeth, shared a deep love for God and passion for learning what the Word of God has to say to us. There is not a person he knew that did not know his love for Christ. He knew what was important in life—having a close relationship with God, walking through life with Jesus—and he encouraged others in their own walk with God.

A funeral service was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansing on Friday, February 5. In lieu of flowers,

please consider making a donation to:

Trinity, Lansing (trinitylutheran-lansing.org); Answers in Genesis, Ark Encounter (answersingenesis.org); Friendship House, East Lansing (friendshiphousemsu.global); or Lutheran Hour Ministries (lhm.org)

Rev. Downs served as the LLL pastoral advisor for the past three years.



Photo courtesy of Michigan District LLL

Lutheran Hour Ministries Sunday

Join the celebration of Lutheran Hour Ministries Sunday any Sunday throughout the year.

Over the last 90 years, Lutheran Hour Ministries' impact has grown beyond the radio signal reach. LHM Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate the difference the Lord is making in lives around the world. Resources for congregations to use on LHM Sunday 2021 are available at lhm.org/lhmsunday.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE



**TEE UP
4 MITES**
Lutheran Women's
Missionary League



CHARITY GOLF OUTING

*Come join us for a fun morning of
Golf & Fellowship
in supporting missions.*

*All the net proceeds will be
given in a giant Mite Box
during the convention.*

CONNEMARA GOLF COURSE
2327 Lexington Road Nicholasville, KY 40356

4-Person Best Ball Scramble Format
Men and Women

Wednesday June 23, 2021

Find the registration form at lwmlmichigan.org

Children Tell Good News of Great Joy

Each year, Christ Our Savior, Livonia's Early Childhood Program combines with the Sunday School children to put on a Christmas production for the congregation and the Early Childhood families. They host a meal before the program and celebrate afterward with cookies for all who attend. They usually begin rehearsing in October so the children will be ready to tell the account of our Savior's birth.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, they were disappointed that they could not have that many families in the building for the event, so they decided to put together a video production of the children enacting the Christmas account as told in Luke 2:1–19. A member of the congregation, Paul Riegel, agreed to help record the children each day; he carefully edited each recording to ensure that all children in the early childhood program were featured. The newest infant in the program had her debut as baby Jesus. They were blessed with unusually warm weather, which allowed them to capture Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem outside, along with the shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flock.

As the finishing touches were added to the program, the pastors thought it would be fitting for this to be played as the Gospel Lesson at the Christmas Eve services. Rev. Dean Davenport, senior pastor, explains: *"Because of our state of affairs, we were encouraged to do things differently when*



Mary, Joseph, and the Donkey traveling to Bethlehem.

it comes to worship, Christmas gatherings, and programs. We knew that we wanted the children involved somehow in telling the story of Jesus' birth. We knew that, especially now, the members of our congregation and the children's families needed to see and hear of how God is present with us!"

The video (<https://bit.ly/36kLMTu>) was posted on the church's website for families and congregation members to watch. Church members and Early Childhood families were filled with joy as they watched the little children actively involved in telling the Good News of such great joy. Christ is born! Hallelujah!

LCMS Life Ministry Conference March 19-20

LCMS Life Ministry will host its first-ever virtual life conference March 19–20, under the theme "Making Disciples: Valuing Life."

Conference sessions will help you explore a distinctly Lutheran understanding of the sanctity of human life, specifically as it pertains to speaking for life in the public square; caring for life in your community; and teaching about human life.

Hear from theologians and human care advocates, including LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, Focus on the Family Vice President of External and Government Relations Timothy Goeglein, and Deaconess Tiffany Manor.

Explore a variety of life topics for participants of all ages, with your family, congregation, or on your own. A Spanish track—with sessions offered in the language—will be available as well.

You can access the conference by livestreaming, watching on-demand videos, and engaging with speakers through question-and-answer opportunities. Register individually or as groups of 10 for a group registration discount.

To register for the conference or to learn more, visit lcms-life.org.

Council of Lutheran Women Virtual Luncheon

The 57th Annual Council of Lutheran Women's Luncheon will take place virtually on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. Women of the Year 2020 (WOY) who were unable to be honored last year when we were forced to cancel, plus any new WOY additions submitted for 2021 will be honored.

The guest speaker will be Humorist Jan Struck. Her earliest memories revolve around her church home in Indianapolis, Ind. where she experienced her elementary education in a two-room Lutheran school. Her strong Christian background led her to Valparaiso University where she received her theater degree.

In addition to the Recognition of the Women of the Year, the annual Luncheon is the main fundraiser for supporting the Council's Scholarship Program, two Detroit Food Banks, Operation Layette, and an opportunity for an in-gathering of donations for several other area ministries that are also Inter-congregational Members of the Council. The needs for these efforts have not stopped and in some cases have increased.

For more information, visit clwmichigan.com.

Pat Maier Receives Award from Concordia University Ann Arbor

On January 14, 2021, Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA) announced its 2020 Special Awards Recipients. The Outstanding Alumnus Award honors graduates of Concordia for reflecting in their lives and careers the values upon which the university was founded. The 2020 award recipient was our beloved Pat Maier, wife of Michigan District President Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier.

Patricia “Pat” Kemmerling Maier is a 1977 graduate of Concordia Junior College, Ann Arbor. A pastor’s wife and former Lutheran educator, Pat met her husband David on campus. She has been blessed to serve the Lord in the many ministries of their churches and schools in Michigan and Illinois. Most recently, as wife of the Michigan District President, she values the opportunity to connect with ministry wives and to help plan The Katie, a yearly retreat (even if it’s virtual) for their encouragement. She has been active in planning and presenting at other retreats, conferences and women’s events, including the Camp Arcadia Women’s Retreats, Women’s Leadership Institute, and the Best Practices for Ministry conferences.

Pat enjoys writing, drawing, and speaking to inspire others in their walk with Jesus. As co-founder of Visual Faith Ministry, she believes in the importance of applying educational research to faith learning by creating resources as well as teaching and writing about visual faith practices that equip and encourage all ages during focused time in prayer and God’s Word. Connie Denninger, co-founder of Visual Faith Ministry, says “*Working with Pat Maier in the founding of*

Visual Faith Ministry has been one of my life’s greatest blessings. Her humble heart and gentle spirit for serving others belies the great ‘hidden’ artistic talent that has come into the light. This gift has served well to point others to God’s Light in His Word as she quietly leads and directs to Him. Whether we share stories of mothering, ministry, or life in the neighborhood, she always reflects the heart of Jesus.”

Pat is a collaborator and artist for *The Visual Church Year*, a collection of worship resources which follow the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Lectionary readings. A published artist, Pat completed a series of margin art for *The Enduring Word Bible* by Concordia Publishing House, as well as several illustrations for recent hymn journals by *Next Step Press*. She believes that the creative use of language and art—when connected with God’s Word—can touch the heart, promote understanding, and spark joy.

Pat and her husband enjoy spending time with their four grown children and their families (which include five grandchildren) here in Michigan and while vacationing in Montana. Her ongoing focus is to spend time each day in God’s Word, connect with the people God places in her life each day, and to find peace in the realization and reality of His amazing grace in all circumstances.



Photo by Elisa Schultz/Michigan District, LCMS

An Ode to Pat Maier

(written by Debbie Kasper, a member of the committee that plans The Katie retreat, and a good friend of Pat’s)

*Whether we see you on the shores at Camp Arcadia detailing women’s retreats,
wrapping your prayers around your family in times of challenge and celebration,
or disinfecting an apartment for a friend who has cancer,
Your helpful heart stands out as witness of your walk with Jesus.*

*Whether your art work is published in a new Bible,
We see you teaching others in a workshop or co-leading a trip to Israel,
or even when you use your spare moments to help a friend “fancify” name tags for a wedding,
Your talents and gifts stand out as witness of your walk with Jesus.*

*Whether we are staying up too late at “The KATIE” talking and praying,
preparing a meal together,
or you are dragging me off to Sweetwater donuts,
Your friendship stands out as witness of your walk with Jesus.*

*Pat, you stand out in many ways ...
It is only fitting that you are receiving the “Outstanding” Alumnus Award from CUAA
as witness of your walk with Jesus.*

Michigan Pastor Recognized for Best Independently Published Book

Rev. Dr. Justin Rossow received the 2020 BIBA® Award for the best independently published book in the Christian category. His book *Delight! Discipleship as the Adventure of Loving and Being Loved* aims to “relieve the burden of being a Christian with the joy of being a follower.” After a year like 2020, we could all use a little less burden and a little more delight.

According to the Best Indie Book Award™ website, the international competition is open to any English book published after 2016 by an individual or by a micro-publisher; large publishing houses need not apply. Each submission goes through a rigorous vetting process and awards are granted in several categories.

“I’m so thankful for the recognition,” Rossow remarks. “Holding onto any kind of faith is difficult. Facing brokenness in yourself and in your world can be crushing. And I firmly believe following Jesus is supposed to be the most beautiful, challenging, difficult, rewarding, and delightful thing you have ever been a part of.”

Rossow graduated from Concordia, Ann Arbor in '94. He served congregations in Missouri, Texas, and Michigan, most recently as Senior Pastor at St. Luke, Ann Arbor until 2019, when he decided to pursue a career in writing for publication.



Photo courtesy of Justin Rossow/Next Step Press

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When you invest with Church Extension Fund your investment helps to renovate and build churches and schools, just like Valley Lutheran High, Saginaw.

“CEF is so respected in the lending industry that when the school talked to local banks to satisfy due diligence on the loan, the lenders told them there was no way they could beat CEF’s rates and didn’t even offer a quote.”

– John Brandt,
Executive Director at
Valley Lutheran High, Saginaw



Church Extension Fund

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www.mi-cef.org



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A Time to Build continued from page 9

seminal book of moral theory and cultural critique, *After Virtue*, he writes this:

A crucial turning point in that earlier history [of the fall of the Roman empire] occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead—often not recognizing fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained ... What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.

There's some hifalutin philosopher-speak in there, and when he wrote those words, Macintyre himself was not yet a Christian (he later converted). But his bottom line is clear: faced with dark times, the solution is the construction of genuine—and I would add faithful—local communities. I can't help but agree.

Suffice it to say, what the world needs right now are Christians and congregations rooted in their local place that are devoted to worshiping Christ, fostering fellowship within His Body, nurturing Christian character, and compassionately serving their neighbors. In short, churches that will attend to being the Church, the body of Christ.

Our Christian calling

Let's let the Lord sort out the big stuff; He's good at that. It's not our calling to change the world, fix all society's ills, or make America a "Christian nation." It is our calling to share God's heart in the little part of His good creation that He has planted us in, which we call our parish.

And when we do, the Lord's light pierces this present darkness. This hope is beautifully articulated, once again, by Martin Franzmann—this time in his little-known hymn, "O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth":

*O Spirit, who didst once restore
Thy Church that it might be again
The bringer of good news to men,
Breathe on Thy cloven Church once more,*



Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

*That in these gray and latter days
There may be those whose life is praise,
Each life a high doxology
To Father, Son, and unto Thee (LSB 834:4).*

We don't get to choose our times, dark though they may be. We do get to choose what we do with them. As Solomon once said, "*There is a time to tear down and a time to build*" (*Ecclesiastes 3:3b*). It's time to build, so that the glorious light of Christ might shine out in these gray and latter days. ■

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

Foot notes:

"In Adam We Have All Been One" Martin H. Franzmann Text: © 1969, Concordia Publishing House. OneLicense A-710759. Used by permission.

"O God, O Lord of heaven and earth" Contributors: Martin H. Franzmann Text: © 1967, Augsburg Fortress. OneLicense A-710759. Used by permission.

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Mr. Scott Blevins (Gibraltar) to SMP, St. Paul's, New Boston
Mr. Glen Bromm (Prudenville) to SMP, Our Savior, Glennie / Living Water, Mio
Rev. Jeffrey Heimsoth (Monroe) to IIM, St. Peter's Eastpointe
Rev. Daniel Jansen (Alger) to New Beginnings, West Branch
Rev. Norman Koy (Sterling Heights) to IIM, Living Word, Plymouth
Rev. Daniel Meckes (Rochester Hills) to Associate, Journey, Oxford
Rev. Matthew Schuler (Oxford) to Sr., Journey, Oxford
Rev. Tyler Walworth (Royal Oak) to Associate, Emmanuel Dearborn
Rev. Benjamin Ulledalen Sr. (Mount Pleasant) to Shepherd of the Hills, Rathdrum, ID

Change of Status/Title Change

Rev. David Davis (Okemos) to Associate Pastor, St. Luke, Haslett
Rev. James Nihiser (Traverse City) to Emeritus
Rev. Harrison Parker (Whitmore Lake) to Candidate
Rev. Thomas Schroeder (Milan) to Emeritus
Rev. Trevor Sutton (Okemos) to Sr. Pastor, St. Luke, Haslett
Rev. Samuel Watters (Canton) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Rev. William Lahrman (Emeritus) from Indiana District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Daniel Jansen (Alger) to English District
Rev. Benjamin Ulledalen Sr. to ID district

Resigned From Roster

Rev. Jonathan Williams (Rodney)

Called Home

Rev. G. Travis Downs (Lansing)
Rev. John F. Panning (Holland)
Rev. Roy P. Schroeder (East Lansing)

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Baglow, Ryan (Lutheran High School of Indianapolis) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (Westland)
Lorenzen, Micah (Prince of Peace, Carrollton, TX) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (Westland)
Wilson, Brenda (Bethlehem, Saginaw) to Principal, Bethlehem, Saginaw

Change of Status

Milroy, Lori (Candidate) to Emeritus
von Fange, Susan (Trinity, Clinton Township) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Wolfe, Emily (Candidate) to Southeastern District

Transferred Into District

Cody, Katelyn (South Wisconsin District) as Candidate
Geraci, Rachel (Iowa District West) as Candidate

Removed From Roster

Rodriguez, Teresita
Standiford, Nancy

Called Home

Brauer, Ethan
Kell, Luther
von Behren, Erich

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.

MARCH 2021

16 Board of Directors' Meeting
Camp Restore Detroit

APRIL 2021

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

MAY 2021

5 North & East Pastors' Virtual Conference
11 South & East Pastors' Virtual Conference
12-13 Circuit Visitors' Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
18 West Pastors' Virtual Conference
25 Board of Directors' Meeting
Location TBD
26-27 Intentional Interim Spring Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale
31 Memorial Day
District Office Closed

JUNE 2021

4-6 Michigan District Junior High Gathering
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
24-27 National Lutheran Women's Missionary League Convention
Lexington, Kentucky
27-29 Michigan District Convention - POSTPONED
Convention has been postponed, stay tuned for more information at michigandistrict.org.

GET EQUIPPED
FOR EFFECTIVE GOSPEL MINISTRY

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- Events
- Resources
- Calls & Vacancies
- Join A Ministry
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