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michigan

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IN TOUCH



GREAT COMMISSION

Easter's Tomb Stone Rolled Away (Vain is the Stone, the Watch, the Seal)

by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

“And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it” (Matthew 28:2).

Early on that Sunday morning of the first Easter, the “Marys,” with Salome and other women, were making their way to the tomb of Jesus. They were bringing spices to anoint Jesus’ body for proper burial.

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As they drew closer, they remembered the very large stone at the door of the tomb. It was that part of their conversation that necessitated the question, ***“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”*** (Mark 16:3).

It is really a question of the ages; an inquiry, sometimes spoken but often not, by many in the world who come face to face with death’s certainty, with death’s grave reality. ***“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”***

This very large ‘stone’ totally obstructs mankind’s path to, and pursuit of, happiness. It shows up uninvited, frequently unexpected, and almost always unwanted, completely darkening any prospect for immortality. Mankind’s attempts at overcoming this final and great enemy have failed miserably. The large stone of doubt, uncertainty, and unbelief has relentlessly blockaded any progress. Death keeps gobbling up loved ones and all humanity in a ruthless, uncompromising march to an inevitable end. ***“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”***

Is there no one who can help? Have there been no discoveries that can mitigate this death march? The daily toll of those brought down by COVID-19, cancer, car accidents, catastrophes, and war—to list but a few—mounts. Is there any hope of life beyond the grave? Who is there that can abolish death and bring life and immortality to light?

After Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, and the widow’s son of Nain, there were whispers of ‘resurrection,’ but men could not believe in it. Perhaps because God *“has put eternity into man’s heart”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11), mankind still has a veiled feeling that there has to be more than this life, that there must be something beyond the grave. This is certainly not an unfamiliar theme in movies.

“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

The women who were headed towards the tomb faced three hard realities that posed three major hurdles:

- The stone itself was *“very large”* (Mark 16:4);
- it was stamped with the *“seal”* of the law (Matthew 27:66); and
- it was guarded by the representatives of power (Matthew 27:66).

Interesting. Humanity faces the same difficulties:

- Death itself is a huge stone that cannot be moved by any mortal power. It is the Holy God’s sentence, His appropriate judgement, for offenses against His law. How can it possibly be averted?
- The “seal” placed on the closed tomb of death is God’s “seal” of the law, His just wrath over sin.
- Moreover, I am confident that Satan’s demon forces were watching the tomb very well to prevent escape.

“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” Asked in another way, *“Can these dry bones live?”* (Ezekiel 37:11). Can any dry bones live again? Can death ever be overcome? Can it be emptied of its power, fear,

and finality? Will we ever be able to see again our loved ones who have died and been buried?

For centuries, the great question of “Who?” remained unanswered for all who did not know Jesus as Redeemer, Savior, and death conqueror. That is, until the women who loved the Lord discovered the answer. Coming to the tomb, they found it empty. **Jesus had risen** just as He said!

Here, then, is the answer to the world’s inquiry: there is another life and bodies will live again, for **Jesus lives!** Therefore, ...

- † we should not mourn or sorrow before the grave as those who have no hope. Jesus Christ is risen! ... and the dead in Christ will also rise (first! - 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- † Jesus would gently wipe away our tears. He knows that because of His rising the believer’s grave is not the end! Miraculously, in Him, it has become the entrance to immortality.

Although death’s fortress was firmly secured by the stone, the angel sent from heaven removed it. Because of Jesus, God’s children will now pass through death’s dungeon but they cannot be shut in. Just as **Samson**, seemingly ambushed by his enemies, *“... arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; ... and put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain ...”* (Judges 16:3), leaving that Philistine stronghold open and exposed, so Jesus Christ, our risen, victorious Lord, in the greatness of

Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?
Mark 16:3

His strength, carried away the once impregnable iron gates of the grave, tearing the posts and every bar from its place! The risen Jesus, exposing the old fortress of death and hell, left it as a city stormed and taken, and—thank God—**powerless!**

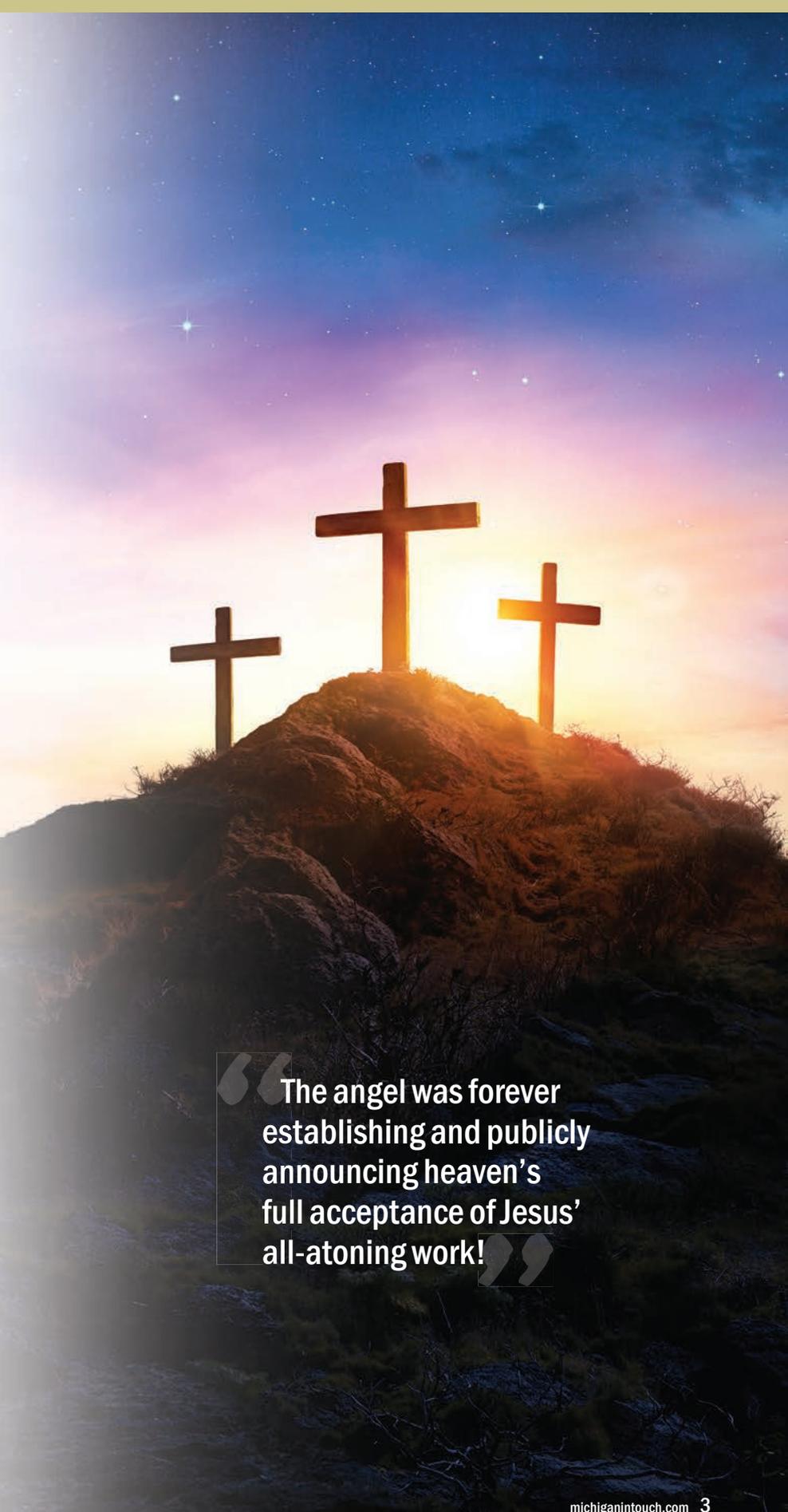
Remember that Jesus “*Christ died for our sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Our sins, like a debt, were charged to Him—to His account. He settled our debt to divine justice by offering Himself to God on Calvary’s altar. He fully suffered the great substitutionary equivalent for **our** suffering. As prophesied, He remained in the tomb three days until His “*It is finished!*” (John 19:30) uttered from the cross for the world’s sin, for our sins, for our debt, for our suffering, was established by the verdict of God the Father. The angel was, in effect, His messenger, the heavenly officer from the court of heaven, “deputized” to open the door for Jesus, rolling the stone away. (Angels always arrive when the truth—in particular the good news of God’s work on behalf of mankind—is hard to understand, believe, or remember.) The angel was forever establishing and publicly announcing heaven’s full acceptance of Jesus’ all-atoning work!

If Jesus had not fully paid the debt for the world’s sin, He would have remained in the grave, continuing as its captive. **But He had done it all!** View Him as He rises—rising by His own power (John 2:19; 10:17–18) but not leaving the tomb without the sacred pronouncement!

The stone rolled from the entrance of the tomb clearly and publicly announces ...

- That all sin has been paid for;
- That death is devoid of its power and fear for God’s children; and
- That the baptized believer is

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A photograph of three wooden crosses standing on a rocky hill. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with some stars visible in the darker upper portions. The crosses are silhouetted against the bright light of the sun.

“The angel was forever establishing and publicly announcing heaven’s full acceptance of Jesus’ all-atoning work!”

An Image of *Mutual Delight*

by Justin Rossow



The following is an excerpt from the Introduction of the book “Delight! Discipleship as the Adventure of Loving and Being Loved” by Justin Rossow, which recently won the 2020 Best Indie Book Award™ for best independently published book in the Christian category.

Over the last couple of years, an image of mutual delight has repeatedly captivated my heart and mind. You know the mutual delight I am talking about, or something like it. You might experience it during a moment of peace in the company of dear friends. You would recognize it in the eyes of two lovers as they first discover they’re in love. But I think you can see this image of mutual delight most clearly in that moment when a darling child rushes into their parent’s arms.

In my imagination, the child is older than an infant, but still small enough to be picked up easily. The parent could be a mom or a dad, or even a grandparent, cousin, or friend. The important thing is the moment when the little girl or boy runs into a trusted embrace, and mom or dad lifts them up and twirls them around, and brings that darling child, still dangling in the air, face to face.

And I don’t know if mom made a funny noise, or dad tickled a little as part of the hug, but the delight of the moment makes the child giggle. That giggle makes mom laugh. That laugh makes the little boy squeal. And so these two go, on and on, for longer than you would think reasonable, simply enjoying each other . . .

You know what that’s like. Mutual delight: that experience of loving and being loved; of shared joy, joy in another person’s joy, that image of a mom or dad beaming into the face of a smiling child until both are rolling in the grass laughing—**that image of mutual delight has changed how I view my relationship with God.**

Of course, following Jesus can be hard. Of course, following Jesus can be confusing, and difficult, and it can end badly (ask any of his original 12; only one got to die peacefully of old age . . .). Of course the call to follow this Jesus is a call to pick up your cross, to lose your life, to bear a new and different yoke.

But this same Jesus also promised that losing your life was the only way to find it; that by joining in his death *already now*, you join in his resurrection life, *already now*; that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

Following Jesus is not supposed to be a weight to carry that drains the fun out of life. Following Jesus means being so full of new life that you can experience joy even in the midst of difficulty.

And that joy, **the joy of knowing Jesus, flows directly from Jesus’ joy of knowing you.**

Time and time again, the Scriptures paint for us a picture of a God who absolutely delights in people, a God who not only loves them and saves them, but

“The Holy Spirit works *delight* in you as a *gift*, to lead you into a deeper and more intimate *relationship* with God in Jesus Christ.”

enjoys them and wants to spend quality time with them. The God Jesus knows and reveals as Father is the God of relationship, who delights in specific individuals and throws parties in heaven because of what you just did this last week.

Of course, following Jesus means coming to grips with your failures, with your sin, with your shame. Of course discipleship entails repentance, and molding, and refining. Of course dying to your sinful self daily isn’t a lot of fun. An old, traditional confession of sins starts, “I, a poor, miserable sinner . . .” Repentance is an essential part of discipleship.

Another old, traditional confession also expresses to God the reason I want to be forgiven: “... that I may *delight* in your will and walk in your ways...” Right next to repentance, ***delight is an equally essential part of discipleship.*** You cannot be a consistent, faithful follower the way Jesus intends without the key ingredient of delight.

Now, watch it! To say you *have to* have delight can become just as much a burden as saying you *have to* repent, when in both cases Jesus intends for you to receive these habits of following as a gift, not a burden. The Holy Spirit works *repentance* in you as a gift, to lead you into a deeper and more intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ. But what I really want to get at in the rest of this book is this: **The Holy Spirit works *delight in you as a gift*, to lead you into a deeper and**

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Celebrate God's Love through Psalm 136

by Megan Schultz

Psalm 136 is a great place to turn at times we are not “feeling loved.” It has a liturgical nature—meaning that verses are structured in a call and response format. Each one of its 26 verses repeats the sentence, “His steadfast love endures forever.” We can imagine the people of Israel saying this in response to the Levite priests during worship. It would be used as a public praise and declaration of who our God is and what He has done. In the Jewish tradition, Psalm 136 has been called the Great Hallel, or Great Psalm of Praise. “*It does not use the word hallelujah, but it is called the Great Hallel for the way it rehearses God’s goodness regarding his people and encourages them to praise him for his merciful and steadfast love*” (James Montgomery Boice).

When you look closely at this Psalm, you can see how the verses are structured to fall under certain themes. Verses 1–4: The love of God in who He is; 5–9: The love of God as Creator; 10–15: The love of God as Deliverer; 16–22: The love of God as Promise Keeper; 23–25: The love of God as our Helper; and 26: Gratitude to our Loving God (Adapted from the *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*). These themes lend themselves to a fun and thoughtful devotional practice. Consider writing your own version of Psalm 136, giving thanks to God for the steadfast love He has shown YOU in YOUR life! Read the verses from each category and consider how you can see those attributes of God in your own life context and write a verse of your own. Here’s an example:

Verses 1–4: The love of God in who He is
***Praise be to our Emmanuel, our loving Father, the God who sees me,
for His steadfast love endures forever.***

5–9: The love of God as Creator

***To Him who knit me together, designing who I was to be and what I would do, and who graciously created faith in my heart,
for His steadfast love endures forever.***

10–15: The love of God as Deliverer

***Who sheltered me from the storms of life, providing me a firm foundation (roots) in Christ that I could always rely on and return to as I faltered,
for His steadfast love endures forever.***

16–22: The love of God as Promise Keeper

***My God, who chose ME to serve His people, giving me eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help, sending me out as His worker into the field,
for His steadfast love endures forever.***

23–25: The love of God as our Helper

***The One who is always close by, even as my heart wanders to earthly things, the One who daily restores me to Himself,
for His steadfast love endures forever.***

26: Gratitude to our Loving God.

I trust You with my future, for your steadfast love endures forever.

Allow God to shower you in His steadfast, enduring love as you immerse yourself in meditation on His Word and apply it to your life! ■

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

Racial Healing for the Church and the Community

The death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 brought to the surface racial tensions that have long been pushed down or ignored by many, including the Church. These sins have been put off to the side because we don't think it affects us. But as Michigan District, LCMS President Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier reminds us, *"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"* (Ephesians 6:12).

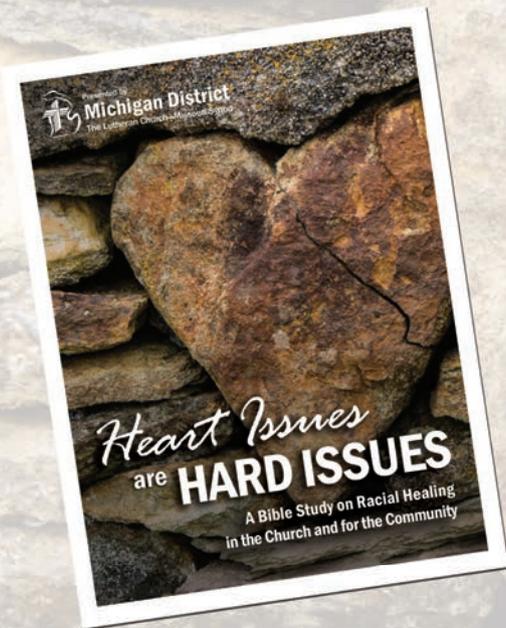
Maier says, *"The church is God's instrument to make a difference in the world. We can't legislate, we can't delegate. God has called us to permeate. We're to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and we're to take this on as a sin that has crept into the Church as well. Our complicity is there by not dealing with this, by not acknowledging the sin that can exist in our life as well ... God has called us to be salt, to touch sin, to recognize that, in Jesus Christ, the Church has been established as a witness in this world that not only points out our sin, not only forgives us of our sin, but gives us strength to live different lives; to be salt, to be light and permeate dark-*

ness, and to make a difference under the cross of Christ."

The *Heart Issues are Hard Issues Bible Study on Racial Healing in the Church and for the Community*, created by the Michigan District, LCMS and written by Rev. Dr. Bradley Yops, is now available to download for free. The Bible study sessions with video presentations are based on the *Heart Issues are Hard Issues* conference that took place in October of 2020, featuring speakers Rev. Christopher Bodley, Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, Rev. Keith Haney, and Dr. Ed Stetzer.

This Bible study challenges one to struggle with maladies (bias and prejudices) that you may or may not harbor. Hopefully and prayerfully, you and your study group will arrive at the biblical answer to what it means to be the church today and how we, as the church, will proceed into the future in proclaiming God's love through His Son and practicing this love to all mankind—*"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

This Bible Study can be used by individuals, congregations, small groups, etc. To receive the study and video playlist, simply complete the form found at michigandistrict.org. ■



Heart Issues are **Hard Issues**

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

This study includes:

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

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APRIL 2021

God’s Hand Guides CEF-funded Renovations at St. John Lutheran School of Fraser



St. John Lutheran School began Phase 2 renovations of an old wing in November 2020. Help came from all corners of the St. John community with members from the Board to Parent Teacher League providing a helping hand.



“Everyone here, from the church to the school to our families at home, sees that our future in faith will hinge on teaching our children in the words and ways of Jesus.”

Levi Bringold
Principal
St. John Lutheran School
Fraser

Last year, even as COVID was creating uncertainties in practically every area of life, St. John Lutheran School of Fraser could give thanks to God for their enduring success.

Families from all over Macomb County, northeast of Detroit, have continued to choose St. John for everything from preschool through Grade 8. Enrollment for 2020-21 climbed to 240 students, pandemic or not. Parents have especially appreciated that St. John has been able to maintain face-to-face learning throughout the school year.

Yet growth has brought challenges. The time had come to renovate a wing of the school that hadn’t seen serious updating since the 1960s or 1970s. “We all saw the need,” says Principal Levi Bringold, who accepted a call to St. John last August. “But still the questions remained: Should we remodel in this difficult time? Are we confident we can maintain our momentum? Can we be sure this is the responsible thing to do right now?”

Funding was available for the remodel through a loan from Church Extension Fund which covered over 90% of the estimated

costs. The project had been foreseen as Phase 2 of the “Branching Out” renovation campaign that St. John had initiated in May 2018, and which had already financed many other repairs at the church and school. Phase 1 was highlighted in the February 2019 edition of Spotlight.

“Ultimately,” says Bringold, “God was pointing us to proceed. Enrollment was strong, and tuition payments were steadily coming in. There were no real roadblocks. All of us — church leadership, lay leadership, school leadership — came to agree: ‘Let’s do this!’”

State of the Art Learning

As CEF Spotlight interviewed Principal Bringold for this edition, volunteers were signing up to begin cleaning and painting in the updated wing. Help was coming from all corners of the St. John community – everywhere from the school’s Board of Trustees and Parent Teacher League to the church’s Building Committee and overall membership. Providing Christ-based education is, truly, a family affair at St. John.

The renovated wing will house St. John’s preschool, Kindergarten and First Grade classrooms, Young 5 program, school-age childcare, school offices, and a copying room. A particular highlight will be the new state-of-the-art preschool, where a wall was removed to put all learning



Before



After

Above is the before and after images of the new school additions. The newly renovated wing will house St. John’s preschool, Kindergarten and First Grade classrooms, the Young 5 program, Childcare room and School Offices.

and play areas in one big space, for optimal interaction.

The renovated wing will also allow for growth in St. John’s offerings. This may include expanded day care — a pressing need for so many young families in the area.

The wing’s renovation began this past November. Walls that were no longer needed came down, while new walls went up. Plumbing and electricity were improved throughout. The renovations should be completed by September in time for the 2021-22 school year.

The Go-to Funding Resource

Principal Bringold’s own children, a First Grader and a Third Grader, are students at St. John. God’s hand guided him to Fraser in 2020 after six years as Principal of Trinity Lutheran School in Reese, Michigan, near Saginaw, where he and his wife grew up.

Bringold has now been in Lutheran education — teaching, coaching,

and leading — for 11 years. He holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Saginaw Valley State University, and earned his colloquy from Concordia University in Ann Arbor. St. John is indeed blessed to have this dynamic young man at the helm of their consistently innovative school.

St. John is blessed too to have Church Extension Fund for financial support. “CEF is the go-to resource for Lutheran churches and schools throughout Michigan,” says Bringold. “They’re great to work with, and always accommodating of a ministry’s unique needs.”

The CEF-financed wing renovation is the latest milestone in St. John’s long history of commitment to investing in Christ-based education. Per Principal Bringold: “Everyone here, from the church to the school to our families at home, sees that our future in faith will hinge on teaching our children in the words and ways of Jesus.”



Church Extension Fund

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Here We Stand Campaign Summer Events

by Ray Zavada

The *Here We Stand* campaign is now three months into its fifth and final year of the Congregational Phase. Another way of saying it is that there are only nine months left for you to become a campaign participant. (Although I must add that some pledge fulfillments, and even new gifts, will continue to be received after the formal ending of the campaign.)

With the end of the campaign approaching, our two very popular summer events that support local congregational and school ministry will be held for the last time (at least as campaign-supporting events). Both events offer schools, congregations, and even individuals opportunities to raise significant funding for programs, operations, individual classrooms, and others.

Reformation 500 Walk, Run, Bike

This event is completed over several months to allow each participant to have the benefit of the entire summer to accomplish their exercise and fundraising goals. The typical period of time to participate is between May 1 and September 30, although some begin earlier and end later.

Participation is easy. Simply set a goal of completing 500 miles of exercise (or more or less miles depending upon your fitness level) during the time period you select. Then as you walk, run, or bike to reach your goal, you collect pledges or donations for the miles you will eventually complete. Then, upon reaching your goal, simply collect the monies you have raised through your efforts. We ask that you give 50% of the total monies you receive to your church, school, or other designated ministry, and send the other half to the *HWS* campaign of the Michigan District. It's that easy to participate.

Some of the most successful participation in the *Reformation 500* has seen members of congregations and schools form a team for a collective purpose or as a competition against others.

Here We Ride Bike Event

This very popular event for individuals and families is scheduled for August 7–8, 2021. Although the days are set, there are still decisions and details about the event that need to be made, as we continue to learn about the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential gathering limitations we must follow. As soon as our event chairperson (Pastor Chris Garcia from Immanuel, Bay City) and our planning team are comfortable making those decisions, more details will be announced.



Here We Ride

This year's ride may again be an in-person event hosted by a Bay City area congregation as it was two summers ago, or it may be a virtual event as it was

in 2020 (a very successful event, by the way). Our hope and prayer is that it will be both an in-person and a virtual event, and riders may do one or both. For example, you could ride in person on Saturday on the Bay City Trailway and complete a second ride in your community on Sunday; or you could complete one or two days of riding in just your community.

For now, I ask that you place the date(s) of your planned participation on your calendar, and we will provide more specifics as soon as we are able.

For more information, visit michigandistrict.org/hereweride or contact Linda Ekong at the Michigan District office at linda.ekong@michigandistrict.org or by phone at 734.213.4265.



Here We Stand

Campaign Goal: \$10 million

Campaign Progress: \$8.21 million
(as of March 12, 2021)

Participating Congregations: 166

Individual Contributors: 1,388

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 Hour Ministries is Looking for Congregation Ambassadors

What is an Ambassador? An LHM Ambassador is a congregation member who nurtures a relationship between Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) for the purpose of sharing resources and helping the congregation use them. LHM aims to energize, equip, and engage laity for outreach. Through partnering with congregations, LHM helps equip members to serve as Ambassadors.

Once you have been recruited or sign up to be an LHM Ambassador, you simply start by checking your email for the latest trainings and Ambassador-related information.

LHM Ambassadors are also invited to a yearly Lutheran Layman's League (LLL) convention to learn about LHM resources. There you can network with other individuals who are also excited about sharing their faith.

Simple ways Ambassadors use LHM's resources include:

- Leading Bible studies, book studies, and listening groups;
- Stocking Project Connect booklet racks;
- Hosting LHM Sunday at your congregation.

All LHM Ambassadors receive:

- A welcome gift;
- 20% off their purchases at shoplhm.org;
- Access to exclusive content and training at lhm.org/ambassador;
- Special gifts when leading programs in their congregation;
- A dedicated staff support person to help with your questions.

Michigan District Lutheran Laymen's League President Chuck Bennett is asking every congregation to appoint a Lutheran Hour Ministries representative for their church. If you know someone who is (or if you are) interested in being an LHM Ambassador in your congregation, contact Chuck at imseebie@gmail.com.

News and Events

New Hmong Luther's Small Catechism

It is with great joy that the LCMS Hmong Ministry celebrates the publishing of the *Luther Small Catechism with Explanation* translated into the Hmong dialect. The *Luther Phoo Ntawv Qha Kev Ntseeg Miv* (Blue Hmong Dialect) and *Luther Phau Ntawv Qhia Kev Ntseeg Me* (White Hmong Dialect) were translated by Rev. Dr. Lang Yang and his wife, Phoua H. Yang. The book cover and setting was done by their daughter, Gaoxee Stephanie Yang.

Rev. Dr. Lang Yang is the President of the Hmong Mission Society, Associate Pastor/Director of Hmong Ministry at St. Michael's, Richville, and Director of Hmong Ministry at Our Savior, Lansing. He also serves as Chaplain for the United States Army Reserve and Civil Air Patrol—United States Air Force Auxiliary.

The book was made possible through funding from the Michigan District, LCMS and Our Savior, Lansing. A big thank you goes out to the Hmong Mission Society, a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, for its dedication to making this book available.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Dr. Lang Yang

The new *Hmong Luther Small Catechism* will include the full range of Christian vocabulary and theological and Lutheran doctrine in the Hmong context. This will enable its broader use in the LCMS Hmong Ministry and throughout the world.

Free Spanish Resources for Sharing the Gospel

Great news! The Lutheran Heritage Foundation has a variety of FREE new resources available in the Spanish language, including *Luther's Small Catechism*, *The Bible with Small Catechism* (combined volume), *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, and "Jesus Never Fails" devotional tract.

These materials are available to any LCMS church, mission, or individual who wants to share the Good News with their Spanish-speaking neighbors. To order, send an email to info@LHFmissions.org or call the LHF office at 800.554.0723.

Lutheran Heritage Foundation, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, makes God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. To learn more, visit lhmissions.org.

National LWML Convention Seeking Volunteers

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) 39th Biennial Convention in Lexington, Kentucky, June 24–27, 2021, is hosted by the LWML



Districts of Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Committees have been planning servant activities, a golf outing, tours, child care, a mission pledge walk, blood drive, and many other events for the ladies and men coming to the “Horse Capital of the World”—Lexington. We will be “Looking to Jesus” as we proclaim His greatness at the opening worship service, hear from Mites in Action Mission Speakers, and study His Word.

Information on the safety protocols for the convention and registration is available online at lwml.org. Discounted early registration has been extended until April 14, 2021.

Over 500 volunteer workers are needed to be “host.” This is an opportunity we have to welcome thousands to the bluegrass and rolling hills of Kentucky where participants will join together in worship to the Lord, sing His praises, hear mission stories, and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. Become a volunteer worker. Call for Workers forms are located under Hot Items on lwmlmichigan.org.

Join us as we are “Running the Race . . . Looking to Jesus!”

En Gedi Music Fest– REVIVE 2021

En Gedi Music Festival is a two-day Christian event featuring regional and national artists. You will enjoy a variety of Christian artists on the EGMF Main Stage for both days. This year, the music festival will feature Mandisa and Colton Dixon.



This summer's theme is REVIVE 2021 based on Psalm 71:20, “*You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.*” The event takes place July 23–24, 2021 at the En Gedi Campground River Resort in Leonidas, Mich. (engediresort.com). The event is sponsored in part by the Michigan District, LCMS.

With the side effects of pandemic lockdowns and precautions, many people are suffering physically, mentally, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. The creators of this music festival feel one of its most important jobs is to connect people to the churches and ministries wherever they live. God has provided these people, communities of faith, and ministries, and the hope is that those who attend will either connect with someone who needs help or be connected with someone who can help. Come; be uplifted and encouraged as you hear the music and testimony of Christian artists. Enjoy a weekend with your family and REVIVE!

The atmosphere of this festival is perfect for families, groups, and individuals. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit engedimusicfest.com. A three-day camping package is also available.

GFAGC Receives Excellence Award

In early March, Gifts For All God's Children (GFAGC) received an incredible blessing as it was recognized by the Troy Chamber of Commerce with its 2021 Nonprofit Excellence Award.

GFAGC Executive Director Patti Jacques shares, “*Since its beginning at Faith, Troy in 1988, GFAGC continues to be supported by its incredible donors, volunteers, and staff. God has supplied everything needed in miraculous ways so we can make a difference in the lives of thousands and thousands of children and their families.*”

GFAGC's mission is to meet needs and share the love of Christ with at-risk children in Southeast Michigan. They accomplish this by connecting children through churches and community organizations, giving gifts, and planning events such as outreach programs, tutoring, and summer Bible camps. To learn more, visit giftsforallgodschildren.org.



Photo courtesy of Gifts for All God's Children

Michigan District Convention Postponed

Because of the COVID-19 virus and how it has upset schedules and all other logistical issues, a late 2020 letter from LCMS President Rev. Matthew Harrison to all congregations included a referendum asking to postpone the Synod and District convention cycle by one year. This meant that districts could hold conventions in 2021, if at all possible, but also into 2022. On February 15, 2021, that referendum passed. The results show that more than 64% of Synod participated. In Michigan, participation was over 74%. Of those congregations in Synod that voted, more than 90% voted positively. Of those that participated in the Michigan District, more than 98% voted positively. Because of that vote the Michigan District Convention, by virtue of a resolution by the Michigan District Board of Directors, has now been moved to June 26–28, 2022.

The new deadline for nominations and overtures will be February 26, 2022. Nominations that have already been submitted will be honored through the new deadline. If circumstances change with nominees, a congregation may resubmit a new nomination before February 26, 2022. A second valid nomination would effectively cancel

the congregation's previous nomination. Similarly, overtures that have already been submitted will be honored. They too may be resubmitted to reflect updates through the new deadline.

In the end, the Bylaws of the Michigan District (5.6.g) allow for nomination adjustments from the convention floor: *"The convention shall have the right to alter the ballot by amendment."*

Michigan District President Maier shares, *"Thank you to the Michigan District congregations for participating. This is your church. We have the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and we want to share it in the most effective way possible. That takes place through church business in a regular convention, as we indeed gather for worship, fellowship, nurture, inspiration, and the continuing work of the Gospel."*

To download forms or find the latest updates on the 2022 Michigan District Convention, visit michigandistrict.org/convention.

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- Chuck Goerlitz,
Congregational Chairman
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Milan



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Easter's Tomb Stone Rolled Away continued from page 3

a recipient of these blessings and of a most intimate connection with Jesus Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism. Paul writes, “Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3–4).



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This is why we are to daily remember our Baptism. It reminds us that ...

- Our sin is completely paid for and washed away by the sacrificial death of Jesus;
- Our death, whenever it comes, is not to be feared, but recognized with a sure and blessed hope as the entrance—carefully watched over by the ever-present, loving God (Psalm 23:4; Romans 14:8)—to everlasting life.
- We too have died and risen again with Christ. Sounds somewhat “mystical” ... and it is. Nonetheless, we are to know that we were miraculously joined to Him in the most significant events in His—and OUR—life and now have His power to overcome sin and live in this “newness” of life. “Sin” can no longer be a master in our lives just as death no longer has power over Jesus. Please read the context of Romans 6:3–4 by reading verses 1–14.
- *Because of* this “mystical union” with Christ in baptism, we too have *the same Holy Spirit*—that descended on Jesus at His baptism—poured into us, that is, into our new, regenerated spirit, our new life in Him. That same Holy Spirit is calling us, enabling us, to participate in the mission Jesus’ Father had sent Him on. Remember these words of Jesus: “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21–22). Jesus’ “Spirit” is the missionary Spirit of God. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit specifically to equip Him to carry the Mission for which His father has sent Him. **Here**, Jesus includes all His disciples (in particular, I think of the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15)—He includes us—in that same mission and

anoints His own with the same missionary Spirit. Therefore, friends, by the grace, love, design, and appointing of God, we are now privileged to serve as His angels (His messengers - ἄγγελους - Luke 9:52), arriving when the truth—in particular the good news of God’s work in behalf of mankind—is hard to understand, believe, or remember. Indeed, we are ...

- His “sent ones” (ἀπόστολοι - 2 Corinthians 8:23);
- His ambassadors (πρεσβεύομεν - 2 Corinthians 5:20).

As the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16) to those around us wherever and whenever we live, we are to pray for, and work towards, having godly relationships with those in the world in such a way that we have the privilege, opportunity, and (their) trust to be able to share with them ...

- That their sins and guilt have been completely covered by Jesus;
- That death is devoid of its power and fear for God’s children and that **their Savior**, Jesus, will always be with them; and ...
- That they are the recipients of all these blessings and of a most intimate relationship and connection with Jesus Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism. They too can have His power to overcome the sins that plague and oppress them, even addictions.

There is so much to be thankful for: So much love and mercy shown by God to the world through Jesus and now through His followers; so much truth to be found and examined in the Holy Scriptures—Holy-Spirit-revealed truth—that leads to salvation and freedom in Christ Jesus, the risen Lord.

Vain the *stone*, the *watch*, the *seal*,
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise,
Christ has opened Paradise.

Lives again our glorious King!
“Where, O death, is now thy sting?”
Once he died our souls to save;
“Where thy victory, O grave?”*



A blessed and happy Easter life to you all. ■

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

An Image of Mutual Delight continued from page 5

more intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

Now that I can see both repentance *and* delight as gifts, it seems strange to look back at my experience of church and church people. Almost all of the church people I have ever known would point to the need for repentance in the life of a believer; but few and far between were the individuals who knew one of the secrets of the Kingdom: **delight is an essential part of your faith journey.**

Of course, you might not use the word “delight” very much; you might prefer a different vocabulary word. But whatever you call it, I mean that moment when the little boy runs laughing into his mother’s arms and she picks him up and brings him close and each can’t get enough of the other’s joy. I call that loving and being loved “mutual delight.” Jesus invites you into that kind of mutual delight in his relationship with you.

Maybe that invitation feels more like a challenge to you, way up here at the very beginning of a book on discipleship as delight. Or maybe it makes your heart beat a little faster and awakens a longing deep in your soul. Or maybe you have no idea how to think about mutual delight with God. All of those reactions are valid.

Although I never heard “discipleship” described by anyone as “the adventure of loving and being loved,” I’m not trying to roll out a new doctrine. I am convinced that the Scriptures themselves invite us to see our relationship with God, perhaps even *primarily*, as **an interaction of mutual delight.**

Whether you are confused, excited, or skeptical about that claim, I invite you to take this journey with me. I want to show you what I have seen in Scripture and share with you what the Holy Spirit has been shaping in me, and perhaps, will shape in you, too. There is such a freedom in loving and being loved, in living not under the burden of religious practice but in the confidence of God’s delight, that I can hardly tell you how much a difference delight has made in my own personal life!

But I am getting ahead of myself.

The ultimate goal of this entire journey of delight is to relieve the burden of being a Christian with the joy of being a follower. To follow Jesus is to have confidence in God’s delight and to have freedom to try and to fail.



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Following Jesus means you are caught up in a love story beyond your wildest dreams. To follow Jesus is to put your foot on a path of adventure, marked by challenges and difficulties and sorrow and failure, but **marked most fundamentally by mutual delight.**

As we read Scripture and think and pray and discern together, I hope you will also come to see discipleship as the adventure of loving and being loved. ■

Rev. Dr. Justin Rossow writes, presents, teaches, and preaches at the intersection of Scripture, culture, and metaphor theory. Justin is the founder of Next Step Press and The Next Step Community, both designed to help people delight in taking a next step following Jesus. Read more at community.FindMyNextStep.org.

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Todd Brunworth (Norton Shores) to IIM Redeemer, Freemont
Rev. Mark Reinsch (Northport) to St. Paul's, Cedar
Rev. Scott Sommerfeld (Ypsilanti) to IIM Living Water, Whitmore Lake
Rev. Mark Werner (North Wisconsin District) to Messiah, Holt

Change of Status/Title Change

Rev. Mark Brandt (Frankenmuth) to Emeritus
Rev. John Kassen (Oxford) to Emeritus
Rev. Michael Wentzel (Grand Rapids) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Oliver Washington (Detroit) to English District

Called Home

Rev. Milton Schemm (Troy)

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Brown, Erika (Martin Luther, Lansing) to St. Peter, Saint Johns
Longden, Daniel (First, Charlotte) to (First, Charlotte) Ordained
Mead, Katherine (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Immanuel, Macomb
Streeter, Amber (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to ISJ Academy, Grand Rapids

Change of Status

Grimm, Timothy (St. Paul's, Centreville and St. Paul's, Colon) to
Candidate
Koch, Beverly (St. John, Rochester) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Vieregge, Keith (Candidate) to English District

Transferred Into District

Weiss, Jeffery (Indiana District) as Candidate

Reinstated to the Roster

Hinck, Barbara

Resigned From Roster

Burgess, Julia
Creeden, Ashleigh
Rathje, Kristin

Removed From Roster

Enge, Jennifer

Called Home

Knopp, Allen

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.

APRIL 2021

- 1 Maundy Thursday
- 2 Good Friday
District Office Closed
- 4 Easter Sunday
- 10 Michigan School of Missional Formation Meeting
Messiah, Clio
- 14 Alliance Defending Freedom Webinar
- 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
- 22 Regional Track Meets
Valley Lutheran HS; Lutheran High North;
Macomb HS
- 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

- 5 State Track Meet
- 24–27 National Lutheran Women's Missionary League
Convention
Lexington, Kentucky



Michigan District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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Visit us today at
michigandistrict.org

District Office Notice

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

michigandistrict.org | 888.225.2111