

June/July 2021

# michigan

## IN TOUCH

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

### GREAT COMMISSION

## Luther at the Diet of Worms Part 1

by William Wangelin

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 was a momentous milestone that commemorated Martin Luther sparking the Reformation through the posting of the 95 Theses on the castle church door on October 31, 1517 in Wittenberg, Germany. The impact of that event and its consequences were certainly not known at that time, but unfolded through the Reformation movement in the following years. We are following those events 500 years later and reflecting on the consequences and blessings.

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Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

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**Luther knew where his heart and faith were grounded—in God’s Word and the sake of the Gospel ...**

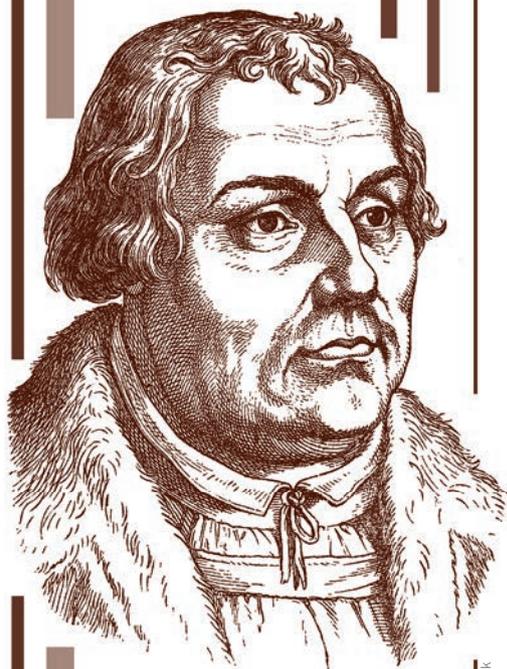
Perhaps one of the most significant moments of the Reformation, and certainly in Luther’s life, was his appearing before the Congress of the Holy Roman Empire, before counts and nobles, princes and electors, and the Holy Roman Emperor himself, the young Charles V. What Luther said at this moment would set the Reformation on an irreversible course against the forces of the pope and emperor. This was the moment of decision where Luther’s faith in God and his conviction that the Scriptures were the highest authority in the church would lay the foundation for the Reformation movement.

The imperial congress, called a Diet, was held in the city of Worms (pronounced “Vohrms”), one of the most ancient cities in Germany. This is where we get the name of this event, called the Diet of Worms. It was a four-month long gathering of the top levels of government in the Holy Roman Empire—nobles, knights, counts, and free cities called “The Estates” and the top rulers called “The Electors,” which included three archbishops and also the Prince Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, who was Luther’s protector.

The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was from the Spanish line of the Hapsburg family, and was only 21 at the time. In fact, this was his first imperial diet, and all eyes were on the young emperor as he had to grapple with internal and external threats from France, from the pope, from the Muslim armies advancing into Europe, and now a theological dispute with a little German monk that threatened the unity that his empire needed precisely at this moment.

After Luther started the debate about indulgences in 1517, the discussions focused on the nature of the Gospel (saved by grace through faith alone—not by works) and the authority of the Scriptures (which Luther claimed were infallible, unlike popes and councils, which could err). As Luther promoted his ideas at the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518 and the Leipzig Debate with John Eck in 1519, his attacks against the church hierarchy over the abuses they tolerated and the false doctrine they promoted reached the ears of the archbishops and the pope himself. Luther’s key writings in 1520 (*On the Freedom of a Christian*, *the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *Address to the Nobility of the German Nation*) caused so much public antagonism to Rome that some feared a mass uprising. These writings were the last straw. Several church leaders in Germany made it their goal to squash the debates caused by Luther and reinforce the authority of the church. They succeeded in having Luther excommunicated by the pope in January, 1521. They pressed the emperor to ratify the pope’s decree with a civil injunction against Luther, showing the unity of church and state against heretics. This was to be taken up by the Diet in Worms.

In a strange twist of events, including a delicate dance of politics, piety, and diplomacy, the influence of Fredrick the Wise and Luther’s supporters managed to somehow change the course of the proceedings, so that rather than simply condemn Luther, he should be brought forward to give an opportunity to speak. Some thought this was playing with fire, as it might give the heretic an opportunity to further spread his teachings and



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Photo by Elisa Schultz \Michigan District, LCMS

# Here Am I, *Send Me!* Kingdom Work in Detroit

by Megan Schultz

It all started with a phone call back in September of last year, as God was leading Pastor Robert Mikkelson of Peace Lutheran on Detroit's East side to step out in faith. Pastor Mikkelson was thinking of how he could best connect with and serve a family with four young children, leading them to that next step in their faith walk. When I received the phone call asking if I would partner with him in creating a program for this family, I was optimistic with my enthusiastic YES! Of course, there were some doubts: Would they come despite the pandemic? What's the format of the class? How many weeks? What curriculum? But this was a tremendous opportunity! If a family wants to grow deeper in their faith, you don't question, you just follow God's lead.

Pastor Mikkelson and I launched the program, in person, on October 13, 2020. The format was simple—Pastor would lead mom and big brother through a simplified Catechism class while I taught the younger kids Sunday School-type lessons in the basement. This hour-long program doubled when Pastor got connected with another family with five young children! Because of COVID concerns, we held two classes, one right after the other. God was blessing our efforts, but I still wasn't sure. Would they keep coming? Would the kids get tired of coming to church after a long day of zoom school? Would anyone get sick?

But GOD is faithful! Our little group kept meeting every Tuesday for 6 months straight—we even met the week of Christmas! The determination the mothers had to wrangle

their kids to the church after a day of zoom schooling, a full day's work, and picking up from daycare or Grandma's house is remarkable. The dedication to the growth of their children's relationship with their Savior is commendable. Pastor and I were not only teaching in these hour-long classes, we were learning from, connecting with, supporting, and celebrating our community. Various members of Peace supported the program by providing snacks, rides to and from church, filling in to teach, and sitting in on the classes. God is constantly at work around us. When we step out in faith, He works through us to fulfill His plan. The classes culminated on March 28, 2021 with seven baptisms. Seven children had their names written in the Book of Life and took the next step in their walk with the Lord. Being part of that process is SO humbling and such an honor. To be used by God is the greatest joy in this life.

So, if you are anything like me—wanting to be optimistic while constantly questioning, I hope you will take that step of faith. What is God calling your congregation to do? How is He asking you to learn from, connect with, support, or serve your community? Whether it's something big or small, anything done for the Kingdom is worth doing. ■

*Megan Schultz is the Family Life Minister at Large for Acts 2 Enterprise in Detroit. Follow her on Facebook at Detroit Family Life Ministry. She gives a huge thanks to Pastor Robert Mikkelson, Birdia Hambright, Ernie Billingsley, Ora Jones, Amir Afanasev, and Michelle Roberts for answering God's call to serve saying, "Here am I, send me!"*



# Connecting with Internationals

Rev. Dr. Todd Jones (Center) poses with Congolese pastors and some of their wives at the Kiswahili Summit in Lansing, Christ Campus, on January 21, 2019. Also pictured are Rev. Bob Rahn (left) and Rev. Dr. Matt Heise (back row left) from LHF, who came to bring Swahili Catechisms for the group.

The following is a transcription of a podcast aired in October of 2019 but still relevant today. You can listen to the podcast at [michigandistrict.org/podcast](http://michigandistrict.org/podcast).

**I**ntro by Todd Jones: Welcome to Michigan District's Thought Leader Podcast. Today we're going to visit with Pastor Davis about his experiences with immigrant Christian churches.

Jones: I understand your congregation has been working more and more with internationals, especially refugees. Can you tell me a little bit about what's going on?

Davis: Sure. Three years ago what we call our Meridian Campus—and what our Eritrean pastor, Pastor Yohannes, calls our Country Campus—joined forces with what we now call our Christ Campus in downtown Lansing (it was a former English District congregation). When we came together there was already a group of members with a Sudanese background; we also have some people from Ethiopia and Burundi, so there was already an international community there, along with longtime anglo-Lutherans. The Sudanese there had already been led by a part-time pastor, Elamin Bagor, from the Sudan, who had gone through EIIT training at some point. And then about 15 months ago or so a group of people originally from the Congo with a Methodist background became connected with our congregation. We've been

working with them, trying to get them acclimated both culturally and theologically so that we can bring them into our congregation. They have an extensive network of fellow Kiswahili-speaking brothers and sisters in St. Louis; Kansas City; Kentwood, Mich.; Chicago; Des Moines; Louisville... One of our pastors, Pastor Yohannes, is taking the lead with their leaders to get them prepared with a series of seminars so they're ready to become connected with our LCMS ministerium and get involved in our system. So it's been an interesting time—we came together with another congregation already with an immigrant population and then more have come!

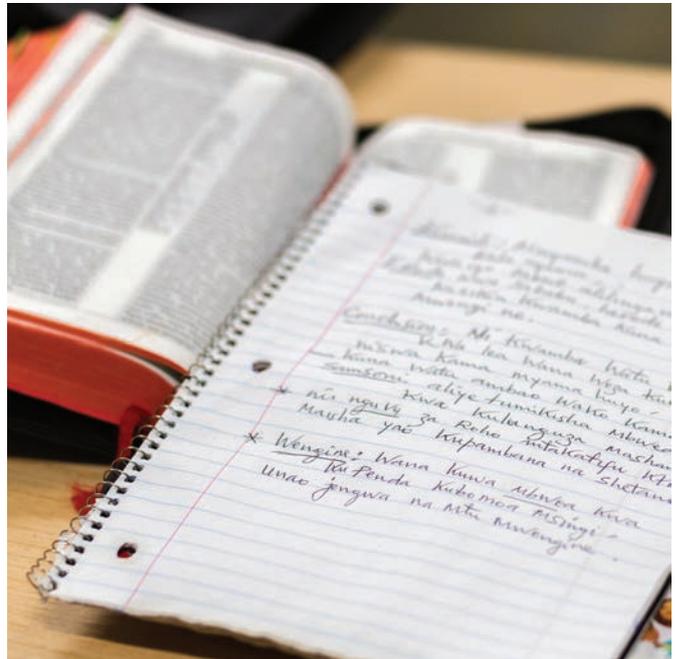
Jones: Yes, it's exciting to see that group of pastors and laymen gathering together from around the Midwest in Lansing to study the Catechism. As I understand you recently led a session to help the Kiswahili leaders from around the country to understand some things about American culture. What were some of the things that you've dealt with in that session?

Davis: I know we talk a lot about differences in culture, and so when we began to talk about American culture and Congolese culture, I wanted to start by reminding them that

in the church, the church is one—there’s the Holy Christian Church. We confess it every Sunday. And so I didn’t want to make it sound like we were people from different planets. We’re the same, we’re the people of God. But certainly at the same time each Christian is from a particular national or people group with its own cultures and traditions, habits and way of relating, and so we do need to spend some time thinking about the differences that we have but—I think this is key—being on guard not to let our differences in culture become either a point of pride or a wedge of division between us and other Christians. And so we had a conversation about this. I wanted to help them focus on their children becoming part of actually a third culture; that their kids will take some things from a Congolese culture and some things from an American culture and develop a third culture. So they won’t be quite like mom and dad and won’t be quite like people raised in the US, but they’d be somehow in between. And so the real heart of what I talked about with these leaders who are also parents was I wanted to help them shape that third culture, what they would have their kids be involved in.

And so I said *“Keep the best of your native culture; be who you are, and be on guard against the worst of American culture and help the kids stay away from some things that we see in American culture that would work against who they want to be as the people of God.”* So of course I didn’t make it sound like everything in America is awful or bad, but it was important to let them know that American culture is not all one. We really aren’t a melting pot; we’re more of a stew pot, and so it’s hard to generalize completely about Americans. I thought it was an important thing for them to understand.

But in general I talked about how Americans are more casual than formal; how we’re certainly more focused on time. We already kid about with pastor Yohannes, he will tell the new immigrants, *“Now this is on American time, not African time.”* We are more time focused. And even if it’s a cultural difference, as they’re getting plugged into America, we talked about the importance of showing up for school and work and meetings and worship on time, even if it doesn’t come automatically. I talked about how Americans are independent, self-reliant—those seem like good things; and how Americans might focus more on getting things done than the relationships in the meantime. I also think this is true and good to say: Americans really



are focused on kindness and equality, that those would be some good things for them to bring into their families.

At the same time there were a number of things we talked about, I said *“Here are some American traits you might be on guard against: because we’re so independent we can become anti-authority, and they may see some of that bubble up in their children. Certainly we’re highly sexualized as Americans; we can be very materialistic as Americans.”* Those are some things that they need to be sensitized to. And

there’s a sense in which Americans, for all of our can-do spirit, there’s a stripe here in America—I don’t know if lazy is the word—a sense of entitlement, that things will fall on your plate, and I wanted them to be on guard against that. So those are some of the things we talked about. I did mention because I think this is true—I think Americans are going to be very welcoming of our new immigrants. I think often we’re very intrigued by people from another culture.

### An Interesting Q&A Session

Jones: You told me that during this session you had a Q&A period in which you were intrigued by the questions they asked you. Would you share some of the questions that you got from the participants as they talked to you about their perspective of the American Christian culture?

*continued on page 14*

“Let your doors be open and become known as a community that welcomes strangers in their midst for the sake of the Gospel.”

## Here We Stand

### Thank You! by Ray Zavada

Every year we publish an updated listing of the congregations that have already participated, or are currently participating, in the *Here We Stand (HWS)* campaign.\* The congregational phase of the campaign is now halfway through year 5 of the five-year emphasis. Listed below are the 168 participating congregations as of May 3, 2021 that have been a blessing to the campaign to this point. On behalf of the Michigan District Board of Directors, staff, and the many who have been blessed by the generosity of these congregations, please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your faithful partnership in the ongoing and future mission and ministries of the Michigan District.



Here We Stand

Addison, Lutheran Church of the Lakes	Conklin, Trinity	Hudsonville, New Hope
Adrian, St. John	Coopersville, Grace	Interlochen, Redeemer
Alpena, Immanuel	Davison, Trinity	Jackson, Trinity
Ann Arbor, Peace	Dearborn, Atonement	Jenison, Holy Cross
Ann Arbor, St. Luke	Dearborn, Guardian	Jenison, St. John
Ann Arbor, St. Paul	Detroit, Historic Trinity	Kalamazoo, Immanuel
Au Gres, St. John	East Lansing, Ascension	Kalamazoo, Zion
Bad Axe, Our Savior	Eastpointe, St. Peter	Kentwood, St. Mark
Baldwin, Grace	Eastpointe, St. Thomas	Lansing, Good Shepherd
Battle Creek, St. Mark	Engadine, Bethlehem	Lansing, Our Savior
Battle Creek, Redemption	Fenton, Trinity	Lansing, Trinity
Bay City, Faith	Flat Rock, Community	Lapeer, St. Paul
Bay City, Immanuel	Flint, Calvary	Leland, Immanuel
Bay City, Zion	Flint, Lamb of God	Lewiston, Bethlehem
Belding, Holy Cross	Flint, Our Savior	Lincoln Park, Calvary
Belleville, Open Arms	Flint, St. Mark	Linden, Hope
Birch Run, St. Martin	Frankenmuth, St. Lorenz	Livonia, Christ Our Savior
Birmingham, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer	Fremont, Redeemer	Ludington, St. John
Birmingham, Our Shepherd	Gaylord, Trinity	Macomb, Immanuel
Bloomfield Hills, Cross of Christ	Germfask, Grace	Macomb, St. Peter
Boyne City, Christ	Glen Arbor, Bethlehem	Mancelona, St. Matthew
Brighton, Shepherd of the Lakes	Glennie, Our Savior	Marysville, Light of Christ
Britton, Emmanuel	Grand Blanc, Faith	Mesick, Faith
Brooklyn, St. Mark	Grand Haven, St. John	Midland, Our Savior
Bruce Twp. (Romeo), Grace Lutheran Fellowship	Grand Rapids, Immanuel	Midland, St. John's
Buchanan, Trinity	Grand Rapids, St. James	Milan, St. Paul
Burton, Pilgrim	Grand Rapids, St. Matthew	Milford, Christ
Cadillac, Emmanuel	Grayling, Mount Hope	Millington, St. Paul
Caledonia, St. Paul	Greenville, Mount Calvary	Minden City, Trinity
Canton, Grace	Hamburg, St. Paul	Monroe, Grace
Carson City, Calvary	Harrison, St. Luke	Monroe, Trinity
Cass City, Good Shepherd	Haslett, St. Luke	Muskegon, Trinity
Centreville, St. Paul	Hawks, Faith	New Baltimore, Christ
Charlotte, First	Hemlock, Zion	New Boston, St. Paul
Cheboygan, St. John	Highland, Faith	Newberry, Trinity
Chelsea, Our Savior	Hillman, St. John	Newport, Christ Our Shepherd
Clio, Messiah	Hillsdale, St. Paul	Northville, St. Paul
Colon, St. Paul	Holland, Christ Our Savior	Nunica, St. Luke
	Holland, Zion	Onaway, Holy Cross
	Houghton Lake, St. John	Oscoda, Trinity
	Howell, Heart of the Shepherd	Otisville, St. Timothy

Petoskey, Zion  
 Pinckney, Trinity  
 Pinconning, St. John  
 Pontiac, St. Paul Community  
 Port Hope, St. John  
 Port Huron, Trinity  
 Portage, St. Michael  
 Redford, Hosanna-Tabor  
 Reed City, Trinity  
 Richmond, St. Peter  
 Richville, St. Michael  
 Rochester, Living Word  
 Rochester, St. John  
 Rochester Hills, Crown of Life  
 Rochester Hills, Gethsemane  
 Rockford, St. Peter  
 Rogers City, Peace

Roseville, Bethlehem  
 Saginaw, Bethlehem  
 Saginaw, Good Shepherd  
 Saginaw, Immanuel of  
 Frankentrost  
 Saginaw, St. Mark  
 Saline, Christ Our King  
 Scottville, Our Savior  
 Sebewaing, Immanuel  
 Shelby Township, Peace  
 South Lyon, Cross of Christ  
 Southgate, Christ the King  
 St. Helen, Hope  
 St. Ignace, Hope  
 St. Joseph, Trinity  
 Stevensville, Christ  
 Sturgis, Trinity

Taylor, St. John  
 Three Rivers, St. Peter's  
 Trenton, St. Paul  
 Troy, Faith  
 Utica, Trinity  
 Walled Lake, St. Matthew  
 Warren, Hope  
 Waterford, Peace  
 Wayne, St. Michael  
 Wellston, Beautiful Savior  
 West Bloomfield, St. Mark  
 West Branch, St. John  
 Westland, St. Matthew  
 Whitehall, Faith  
 Wyandotte, Trinity

If your congregation is not on this list, we pray 2021 is the year it becomes a financial partner in supporting one or all of the important initiatives of the **HWS** Campaign. Please contact Ray Zavada, **HWS** Campaign Director, at 734.213.4264, or Linda Ekong, Campaign Administrative Assistant, at 734.213.4265 with your questions or to request campaign materials, resources, or support. You can also visit our campaign website at [herewestand.michigandistrict.org](http://herewestand.michigandistrict.org).

\*Every effort has been made to publish an accurate listing as we continue to work remotely at the time of this writing. Please notify us if an error is observed so a correction can be made for future publications.

## LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

### Annual Convention Report

The Michigan District of the International Lutheran Laymen's League had its annual convention on April 28 with a virtual workshop conducted by Dionne S. Lovstad-Jones of the Lutheran Hour Ministries.

The workshop was entitled "Households of Faith." Participants were asked to consider the common at-home routines that members do together and decide which five occur most frequently.

Participants were then asked to create their own "household map." In the inner house image, they listed who is in their core household. Then they used the larger, outer house image to reflect on who is in their extended household—those people who are connected to their core household in a meaningful way.

They then participated in an inventory designed to give them a chance to reflect upon their household and its current level of vibrancy. They read 20 statements that correspond to different vibrancy habits within households.

The purpose of this survey was not to grade one's household. Instead, it was to honestly reflect on the

habits of the household and consider how God might be calling it to increase its spiritual vibrancy. While household schedules often shift and change over time, participants were asked to consider these habits during their current season of life.

For more information on how you can participate in a Households of Faith workshop, contact Lovestad-Jones at [Dionne.Lovstad-Jones@lhm.org](mailto:Dionne.Lovstad-Jones@lhm.org).



JUNE/JULY 2021

## Celebrating CEF's 120 Years of Service to the Ministries and Members of the Michigan District



*What inspired the faithful Lutherans who established Church Extension Fund in 1901 to help finance those who would spread the Gospel in Michigan? Did they know that, even 120 years later, their ideas would continue to have such impact on our lives?*



*“What makes us most proud, after all these years, is that CEF can continue to help Build the Kingdom throughout Michigan. We’ve never wavered in this mission.”*

**Andy Sohn**

Vice President - Marketing & Relations  
Church Extension Fund

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, when Church Extension Fund (CEF) was founded, the experience of being a Lutheran in Michigan was considerably different than it is today.

A handful of Lutheran churches had been established here less than 60 years before. Our state’s oldest Lutheran church — St. Thomas, near Ann Arbor — started in 1842. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, founded in 1847, still used its original name, German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Michigan was still viewed as a

rural outpost in need of churches and missionaries.

A recent review of the CEF archives turned up intriguing records of these humble beginnings. We found everything from CEF’s articles of incorporation to logs of investment results over the years. Minutes of board meetings told how CEF helped to methodically build Michigan into LCMS’s largest district – and revealed that much of CEF’s early business was conducted in German!

Church Extension Fund started very modestly in 1901, with just a few initial investors. The archives record



*In this CEF board meeting from 1960, look for Marv Heinitz, whose written reflections helped us trace our 120-year history, in the first seat on the left side.*



*CEF's archive includes everything from investment notes dating to 1908, to the first Savings Stamps booklets from the 1960's, to pins from the first CEF Fall Conference in the 1980's.*

loans to churches across the state for as little as a thousand dollars to buy property, build parsonages, and erect sanctuaries - many of which still stand to this day. Over the course of our 120 years, CEF has loaned more than \$600 million to ministries across the state, using funds invested by over 10,000 mission minded investors.

### From Home to Home

Ironically, CEF did not have a dedicated brick-and-mortar headquarters upon our founding. Early CEF meetings were held in board members' homes, where our records were also kept. Later we were housed in Detroit churches. In the late 1950s, CEF — then known as Church Extension Board — moved into our own offices at 19300 Seven Mile Road in Detroit.

During this time, CEF's leader was Marv Heinitz, who oversaw innovations including our Savings Stamp Program, a stewardship

tool for children of church members. The program continues to build our youth's dedication to saving today. The first to buy our stamps were the students of St. Paul Lutheran School in Farmington. The date of the first stamp sales: May 9, 1961.

When the Missouri Synod began scouting sites for Concordia Junior College (now Concordia University), the idea arose to move both the Michigan District's offices and CEF to the same location. Land was procured in Ann Arbor, structures went up, and the District and CEF soon relocated to our new home, across from Concordia's campus, in June 1966. We're still in the same beautiful building today.

### Into the Internet Age

In 1994, Marv Heinitz retired after 37 years at CEF's helm. Ron Steinke, a long-time member of our Board of Trustees, took over as CEO, beginning another

consequential era. CEF's total assets crossed \$100,000,000 in 1995. By 2003, church members' CEF investments had surpassed that same high mark. Meanwhile, we stepped into the digital age, offering automatic cash transfers and web-based transactions. All the while, loan demand was robust.

When Ron Steinke retired in 2016, he handed CEF's reins to Jim Saalfeld, our current CEO. Like Ron, Jim had served on our Board of Trustees, chairing it from 2009 to 2014. Jim's familiarity with CEF's operations made the leadership transition seamless.

As we now mark 120 years of CEF, we have much to be thankful for. "What makes us most proud, after all these years," says Andy Sohn, "is that CEF can continue to help Build the Kingdom throughout Michigan. We've never wavered in this mission. And we give all glory to God for our success."



Church Extension Fund

Church Extension Fund ■ Michigan District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod  
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Offices: 800-242-3944

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### Website Development through the District's Digital Footprint Initiative

The Michigan District Digital Footprint Initiative (DFI) was developed to address many of the challenges some congregations face when they do not have a web presence, an updated website, or skilled, willing, and trained volunteers. The DFI is rooted on research that shows that about 85% of first-time guests choose a church to visit based on a visit to the website.

The web presence portion of the DFI includes:

- A free audit of your existing website;
- Technical assistance in the backend maintenance of the congregation's domain (Web Address);
- A choice of three template versions which are provided freely to the congregation. A template

controls the overall look and functionality of the site. A professionally developed web template ensures that the site meets today's design aesthetic and is functional. The templates are responsive, adjusting for mobile viewing and desktop viewing.

The District's Communication Department is also involved in assisting you with content audit, as well as professional photography and videography. Several Michigan District congregations have already taken advantage of the District's assistance and their new websites are up and running.

To learn more about this initiative or to sign up, visit [michigandistrict.org/dfi](http://michigandistrict.org/dfi).

### Revive! En Gedi Music Festival

Tickets are still available to attend the En Gedi Music Festival (EGMF), a two-day Christian event featuring regional and national contemporary Christian music artists, taking place July 23–24, 2021 at the En Gedi Campground River Resort in Leonidas, Mich.

You will enjoy a variety of national artists on the Main Stage for both days. Saturday brings added excitement with talented up-and-coming regional and national artists! The Michigan District, LCMS is one of the sponsors this year. Be sure to stop by the District's exhibit and meet some of its Great Compassion ministry leaders.

The atmosphere of this festival is perfect for families, groups, and individuals. God's reviving work impacts everyone who is involved, whether you are a sponsor, director, artist, attendee, or volunteer.

This year's EGMF theme is REVIVE, taken from 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." Some of the side effects of pandemic lockdowns and precautions exist in the many people who are suffering physically, mentally, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. The list, unfortunately, goes on and on, but we have a God who promises through His Word to give new life and revive us again. He wants to help us. He has provided people, communities of faith, and ministries all around us. We can hardly wait to see the plans God has in bringing REVIVAL to and through the Christian church to communities, families, and individuals.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [engedimusicfest.com](http://engedimusicfest.com).



### Meant for More

The 2021 Michigan District Emeriti Pastors' Conference will take place September 7–8, 2021 in Frankenmuth. The theme for the conference will be "Meant for More" and is based on Philippians 1:6: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

The conference speaker, Rev. Dr. John Nunes, has written a book with the same title. *Meant for More* will guide you through how God's promise is effective "in, with, and under" all parts of life. Expressive and engaging storytelling lets you connect all points of your faith life to your personal and public life. Perfect for those just starting to understand how God can give you more in life, or for lifelong Christians who are looking for the comfort of knowing God has you in His hands.

To register, visit [michigandistrict.org/events](http://michigandistrict.org/events).

### Jesus Never Fails

During these turbulent times, a central message that everyone needs to hear is "Jesus Never Fails!" And now the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (a recognized service organization of the LCMS) has a short devotional booklet available AT NO COST TO YOU, in a variety of languages, for outreach to immigrants in your community or for short-term mission trips.

To read the English edition (great for shut-ins and hospital visits), visit: [media.lhfmissions.org/file/lhf-missions/pdfs/English-LHF-Jesus-Never-Fails-booklet-1.pdf](http://media.lhfmissions.org/file/lhf-missions/pdfs/English-LHF-Jesus-Never-Fails-booklet-1.pdf).

This booklet is also available in languages like Haitian Creole, Spanish, French, Swahili, Russian, and Vietnamese. PDFs are available at [LHFmissions.org/publications](http://LHFmissions.org/publications); to order printed copies, email [info@LHFmissions.org](mailto:info@LHFmissions.org).

## Supersized Bike Drive

Not really knowing what to expect, Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Macomb put out a call asking for bicycles to be donated in a 2 hour window on Saturday, April 17. The community could drop off their used bikes, even if they weren't in perfect working condition. Stations were set up to fix the bikes, ensuring the brakes were working, the chains wouldn't fall off, and all nuts and bolts were tightened.

The 2-wheelers are going to the Good News Gang in Southwest Detroit. The organization, a ministry of Metro Life Church, is committed to providing hope and building futures for children living in adverse conditions. This is an organization Immanuel knows well and loves to help. Karen Reincke, the Lead Family Life Minister at Immanuel, said, *"We know there's a need within southwest Detroit, especially for those families."*

What happened in those 2 hours shocked and amazed everyone involved. The bicycles came flooding in, as the donations never seemed to stop. Bikes were lined up, row after row after row. The crews that were fixing up the bikes had to put in lots of extra time with their tools. In total, Immanuel collected 81 bikes, which blew away any



Photo courtesy of Rev. Nikolai Gibbons

expectations they had for this event.

Reincke gushed about the outpouring of support for the families they will help: *"I was glad we were able to help donate bikes—and not just bikes, but usable bikes that are fixed up."*

In partnering with the Good News Gang, Reincke feels blessed that the church and school get to share more than just the bikes: *"We love how they share the Gospel with the kids involved in the Good News Gang."*

Later in the week Pastor Matt Cripps picked up the bikes at Immanuel. He brought their old school buses to show off and load them all up.

## St. Peter's Celebrates 150th Anniversary

St. Peter's Lutheran Church and School in Big Rapids will be holding six special services this year to celebrate its 150th anniversary. The theme "Rejoice Always" is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (NIV).

Special celebration worship services will be held on Sundays at 8:30 and 11 a.m. They are as follows:

- June 27, 2021 Rejoice Always in 150 years of our school. Speakers: Rev. John Schleicher, served 1986–95, and Rev. Jason Schleicher, a son of the congregation.
- July 18, 2021: Rejoice Always in 150 years of all our members. Speakers: Rev. Paul Dorn, a son of the congregation, served 1969–88.
- August 22, 2021: Rejoice Always in 150 years of our professional workers. Speaker: Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, president of the Michigan District, LCMS.
- September 19, 2021: Rejoice Always in 150 years of our Lutheran Heritage. Speaker: Rev. John Bookshaw, served 2004–18.
- October 17, 2021: Rejoice Always in 150 years of worshipping our God. Speaker: Rev. John (Jack) Mackowiak, served 1990–95.
- November 7, 2021: Rejoice Always in 150 years



Photo courtesy of St. Peter's, Big Rapids

of remembering the saints. Speaker: Rev. Robert Mann, served 1982–87.

All are welcome to attend. For more information, contact the church office at 231.796.6684.

## Best Practices Heartland 2021

Great speakers! Great fellowship! Great food! Live and in-person gathering in beautiful Frankenmuth, Michigan! Registration is open and FREE! Interested? Check out Best Practices Heartland in the link below. The conference begins late afternoon on Sunday, September 19 and concludes late afternoon on Tuesday, September 21. For more information, or to register, visit [stlorenz.org/ministries/best-practices/](http://stlorenz.org/ministries/best-practices/).

## Special Recognition

### Meet Our New Pastors and Vicars

The Michigan District welcomed nine pastoral candidates and three vicars in April.

On Monday, April 26 and Tuesday, April 27, two separate worship services took place at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSFW) for assignment of vicarage and internships and for call placements, respectively. Nicholas Gapski was assigned as vicar to Family of God, Detroit, and three candidates received their first placement as pastors in Michigan: Daniel Harrison (Christ, New Baltimore); Timothy Kern (Our Savior, Marlette); and Andrew Twietmeyer (Messiah, Grand Rapids).

### LCMS MICHIGAN DISTRICT



CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FT. WAYNE



### LCMS MICHIGAN DISTRICT



CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS



On Wednesday, May 28, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. (CSL) held two separate worship services for assignment of vicarage and internships and for call placements, respectively. Vicars assigned to the Michigan District are Ryan Ferguson (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) and Briton Nelson (Messiah, Clio). Candidates receiving their first placement in Michigan from CSL are Garrick Beckett (Zion, Mt. Pleasant); Christopher Deneen (Our Savior, Lansing); Benjamin Oelschlaeger (Good Shepherd, Lake Orion); Bryce Rosche (St. Matthew, Westland); Evan Veen (Holy Redeemer, Dryden); and Brandon Wittig (Trinity, Sawyer).

Please keep these students and their families in your prayers as they transition from seminary life into vicarage and full-time ministry.

## Here Am I Lord!

In April, Rev. Dietrick A. Gladden was installed as a Michigan District Missionary at Large - Detroit. He recently accepted the call from the Michigan District to serve Mount Calvary and Charity Lutheran Churches in Detroit. Rev. Gladden will also sit on the Camp Restore Detroit board. Prior to becoming a pastor, he served in the United States Navy and held leadership roles as a pro/semi-pro roller hockey director, travel coach, instructor, and player.

A graduate of St. Louis Seminary's EIIT program, Rev. Gladden was ordained in 2013 and called to serve St. Paul Community Lutheran Church in Pontiac, Mich. where he had already been deployed by St. Stephen, Waterford to work as a deacon since 2006. Through God's grace and the support of sister Lutheran churches, the Michigan District, and dedicated volunteers, the Gospel was brought to the diverse, multicultural city.

In 2017, Rev. Gladden accepted the call to Trinity Cristo Rey Lutheran Church in Santa Ana, Calif. where he was blessed to minister to both the English and Spanish speaking community.

*"What a God-send ... We're eager to see how God will work through this new partnership with Mt. Calvary, Charity, and Pastor Gladden bringing the message of hope in Jesus to Detroit's east side,"* shares Rev. Dr. Robert Kasper, Michigan District Assistant to the President Congregation Mission and Ministries, Metro Zone / Ministry Support and preacher at the installation service.

Rev. Gladden met his wife, Rebecca, while stationed in San Diego, Calif. They have four grown children and three granddaughters.



Photo by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LOMIS

Rev. and Mrs. Dietrick Gladden

**"What a God-send ... We're eager to see how God will work through this new partnership with Mt. Calvary, Charity, and Pastor Gladden bringing the message of hope in Jesus to Detroit's east side,"**

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- Chip May,  
Executive Director at Camp Arcadia



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## Luther at the Diet of Worms

continued from page 2

foment the disgruntled public against Rome. Eventually, the emperor agreed to have Luther summoned to Worms, and sent his herald to personally fetch Luther from Wittenberg, about 325 miles away.

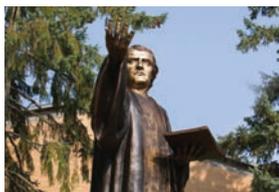


Photo courtesy of Elisa Schuit  
Photography

The herald reached Wittenberg on March 29, and on April 2, Luther set out in a covered wagon with his companions. Their journey to Worms in some ways felt like a death march, where Luther was following in the footsteps of other reformers like John Hus and John Wycliffe, who were condemned and burned. Would Luther go to the flames? He wrote to his friends that he was prepared to give his life for his faith and the cause of Christ. On the other hand, the journey was like a victory parade for a celebrity, and a march of triumph where Luther was greeted by throngs of people who had read his writings and felt like he was some sort of savior to the German people. He was resisting the vile Roman abuses in Germany and protecting the hearts and livelihood of the people. Luther was portrayed as a German Hercules, and pictures and prints appeared that represented violent aggression against the Roman church leaders. Some were moved by faith and piety, some were moved by patriotism and populism. Luther knew where his heart and faith were grounded—in God’s Word and the sake of the Gospel, and he felt that in some ways his journey to Worms was like Christ’s procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, with cheering crowds and a cross before him.

After journeying through towns and cities such as Leipzig, Weimar, Erfurt, Eisenach, and Frankfurt, Luther and his entourage entered Worms on April 16 to the sound of trumpets and crowds of several thousands. The pressure was on the Diet to deal with the Luther matter delicately. The dignitaries in Worms lined up to meet personally with Luther and give him encouragement.

The next day, April 17, Luther was brought into the hall before the assembled diet. He had to be escorted through back doors and passageways because of the crowds outside. As a monk, Luther had not been exposed to such worldly pomp and circumstance. He looked all around the hall and even smiled and waved at people he recognized, and was consequently scolded by the imperial marshal. Luther was not accustomed to the ways of the courts and nobility. As soon as Charles saw Luther, he said, “*He will not make a heretic out of me.*”

Luther’s books were in a pile in the middle of the

room, and Luther was asked if he would recant what he had written. He replied that the writings were indeed his own, but since they contained matters of faith and the Word of God, he asked to respond the next day. Luther’s opponents had reluctantly conceded to Luther even appearing, and they resisted any efforts to let Luther speak or explain his position. There was to be no debate. Confirming the pope’s condemnation and excommunication of Luther was their top priority. Yet the pressure on the emperor intensified as the proceedings went on. The request was granted and Luther was able to appear the next day on April 18. ■

*Part 2 can be found on the District blog at [michigandistrict.org/dietofworms2](http://michigandistrict.org/dietofworms2).*

*Rev. William Wangelin serves as pastor of Our Savior, Lansing.*

## Connecting with Internationals

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Davis: Yeah, that was the best part of the day. When I was done talking, I asked, “*Do you have any questions?*” And here’s the first question: “*Why is Halloween celebrated*



Photo by Elisa Schuit  
Michigan District, LCMS

*by Christians?*” That was the last question I expected to be asked. This was in the middle of September and they hadn’t been in the country for more than about 18 months but already in September they could see all of the Halloween stuff all over and, as we poked around it a little bit, I think it was the ghoulishness, the fright in it and I think from their standpoint—syncretism. You know? Not “*Why are Americans into Halloween*” but “*Why are Christian Americans into it?*” Are we somehow more intrigued with demons and horrible things than we ought to be? I thought that was very interesting.

Another one, maybe not as surprising, was “*Why do Americans take so many drugs? Why do they drink so much?*” Again, you almost take that as a given. That IS America. But why is that? What is the hole that we really have inside us that we spend so much time trying to fill? Why are we anesthetizing ourselves when we’ve got more stuff and more things to do than anybody else in the world? Really fascinating question.

And then this one: “*Why do American Christian women wear their underwear to the beach?*” And again, it wasn’t a question I was looking for, but it went right along with how I talked about how sexualized Americans are, and I think we lose track of that. Why are we such exhibitionists? Not Americans but Christian Americans? It was a

fascinating question.

And the last one, this one too was not on my radar: “*Why do Americans focus so much on their dogs and cats?*” And I got to thinking about that. We’ve had dogs and I like dogs, yet once you start hearing people talk about “granddog” or they refer to their cats as their “children,” and you may know lots of people take their church directory pictures with their animals in it, what does that say? One of the fellows from our team that has a master’s in social work but he is from Africa, he said they’ve done studies on Americans and when we talk about what’s important to us, statistically many Americans will list their animals before their spouse or their children. And it’s certainly puzzling. Why are we exalting the animal kingdom over and against children, other humans? It was a puzzlement to me, very interesting.

As we talked through it I went on to say, “*That’s why we need you here. You’re not here so we can help you. We as Christian Americans need you here.*” You hear about African Christianity being more conservative, more biblical, and so I thought, they’re going to help us think through some things that maybe we’ve been thinking past.

Jones: That is very interesting. I’m going to set aside the dogs and the cats for right now and not touch those sacred cows, but I do want to look at the three other questions, because what I find fascinating about those questions is how they challenge us in our assumptions as Christian Americans. It’s almost like we have compartments in our lives: this is who I am in church on Sunday morning; this is who I am at my devotion time to my family; this is who I am in my community and my neighborhood... and there can be significant shifts in my value framework between those different compartments. You know, so Halloween, it’s highly debated: is it demonic? Is it not? Perhaps we are too jaded by a scientific, materialistic view of the world, and they come from a very spiritual context where demonic forces are ever present.

Davis: Yeah, from their standpoint—are we playing with fire that we are not even noticing?

Jones: Yeah, that’s exactly what I am getting at. I hope we can get a little more depth into their perspective and their experiences and perhaps it will make us even more cautious about those areas that we call grey and they see them as black and white. Maybe our filter has gotten a bit smudged and that’s why it’s grey to us.

Davis: Right. They didn’t say, “*Why do American Christian women dress so scantily?*” They said, “*Why do they wear their underwear?*” It’s just kind of striking. It just seemed odd to them.

Jones: You know, I shared that question with some pastors and it was interesting because the comment from

a couple of the pastors and their wives was, “*I’ve often wondered that. Why can’t we bring back swim shorts? Why do we have to have a bathing suit?*” So maybe those kinds of questions really help spark a deeper conversation on what is the image that we as American Christians are portraying not just in general but especially to the immigrant community coming in?

Davis: You had asked me, “*How does this help American Christians or our congregation?*” I think one of the things that this can do for us is help us think through what is American culture and what is Christian culture. And we’ve blended it all together and haven’t thought through. They’ve got to come in and sift what’s the good and what’s the bad. Perhaps we’ve lost our check valve or we’ve lost our ability to sift. So again, one of the things I’m excited about is, I think these different communities coming to connect with us are going to help and change us as much or more than we are them.

Jones: As your congregation has made connections into the immigrant community and specifically the immigrant Christian community, what would you say as encouragement to other congregations that might face similar opportunities?

Davis: I think the key thing is, don’t wait to become an expert before you get involved. We may be a lot of things but we sure aren’t experts on this. We’re feeling our way, we’re asking questions, we’re learning as we go, we’re going through the doors that God opens. But whatever you do, don’t wait until you’re an expert. Like the feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish—do what you can with what you have and let God give the increase. Open the doors when you can. That’s what we did. When they first came, we asked them what they needed. They said they could use a place to worship. We said, “*Here’s the key, we’ll open it up.*” We weren’t worried about what it was going to cost us, we weren’t interested in the finance, we were interested in the Kingdom. So I think to have an interest in the Kingdom—how is God at work here; get started with what you have and what you know; and I should say this: pray like mad. Our pastoral team gets together once a month and the agenda item on that meeting is prayer. That’s all we do, we pray. And God will build His Kingdom.

Jones: And I just want to encourage you [the reader]: if you have immigrants moving into your community, often especially if they’re coming from Asia, from Africa, they have a deep spiritual passion and are desperately looking to reconnect with a faith community. Let your doors be open and become known as a community that welcomes strangers in their midst for the sake of the Gospel. ■

# Calls and Roster Update

## ORDAINED

### Candidates Placed in the Michigan District:

Mr. Garrick Beckett (St. Louis) to Associate, Zion, Mt. Pleasant  
Mr. Christopher Deneen (St. Louis) to Associate, Our Savior, Lansing  
Mr. Daniel Harrison (Fort Wayne) to Christ, New Baltimore  
Mr. Timothy Kern (Fort Wayne) to Our Savior, Marlette  
Mr. Benjamin Oelschlaeger (St. Louis) to Good Shepherd, Lake Orion  
Mr. Bryce Rosche (St. Louis) to St. Matthew, Westland  
Mr. Andrew Twietmeyer (Fort Wayne) to Messiah, Grand Rapids  
Mr. Evan Veen (St. Louis) to Holy Redeemer, Dryden  
Mr. Brandon Wittig (St. Louis) to Trinity, Sawyer

### Vicars Assigned in Michigan District

Mr. Ryan Ferguson (St. Louis) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth  
Mr. Nicholas Gapski (Fort Wayne) to Family of God, Detroit  
Mr. Briton Nelson (St. Louis) to Messiah, Clio

### Calls Accepted

Rev. Daniel Howard (Warren, MI) to Senior Pastor, Hope, Warren  
Rev. Christopher Yeager (Bridgman) to Associate Pastor, Immanuel, Bossier City, LA

### Transferred Out of District

Rev. Christopher Yeager (Bridgman) to Southern District

### Called Home

Rev. William Merrell (Emeritus)  
Rev. Kenneth Zielke (Emeritus)

## COMMISSIONED

### Calls Accepted

Brenner, Mark (Holy Cross, Saginaw) to Immanuel, Saginaw  
Genthner, Richard (St. John's, New Boston) to Trinity, Reed City  
Meyer, David (West Michigan Lutheran HS, Wyoming) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (North)  
Plopper, Sydney (Concordia, River Forest, IL) to Immanuel, Macomb  
Rich, Mary (St. Peter's, Eastpointe) to St. John, Rochester  
Samsell, Christopher (St. John's, New Boston) to Trinity, Jackson  
Smith, Jennifer (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Trinity, Utica  
Smith-Hubbell, Mary-Bethany (St. John, Bay City) to Peace, Saginaw  
Stoelting, Lara (Candidate) to Trinity, Traverse City  
Wentzel, Katrina (Concordia, Mequon, WI) to Christ, Stevensville

### Change of Status

Berry, Jenna (Shepherd's Gate, Shelby Township) to Candidate  
Dunn, Christine (Our Savior, Grand Rapids) to Candidate  
Schnuell-Ruth, Karen (Candidate) to Emeritus

### Transferred Into District

Foerster, Robert (Eastern District) as Emeritus

### Transferred Out of District

Dunn, Christine (Candidate) to Southern District  
Mayhew, Patricia (Shepherd's Gate, Shelby Township) to Minnesota

A complete up-to-date listing of Calls and Vacancies can be found at [michigandistrict.org](http://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](http://michigandistrict.org/events)

## JUNE 2021

- 5 State Track Meet
- 23–25 FLAME Conference  
Double Tree Ann Arbor
- 24–27 National LWML Convention  
Lexington, Kentucky

## JULY 2021

- 2 District Office Closed
- 4 Independence Day
- 5 District Office Closed
- 23–25 En Gedi Music Festival  
En Gedi Resort, Leonidas

## AUGUST 2021

- 2–4 Principals Conference  
Higgins Lake
- 10 Early Childhood Directors Conference  
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
- 11 Early Childhood Teachers Conference  
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
- 15–16 Board of Directors Retreat  
Location TBD
- 19 Deacon/Supervising Pastors Conference  
Location TBD

## SEPTEMBER 2021

- 3 District Office Closed
- 6 Labor Day  
District Office Closed
- 7–8 Emeriti Conference  
Frankenmuth
- 12–14 Deacon Conference  
Camp Arcadia
- 19–21 Best Practices Heartland Conference  
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 24–26 Church Extension Fund Conference  
Marriott Auburn Hills
- 27–30 Intentional Interim Conference  
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

## District Office Notice

As of June 1, the District Office is open Monday-Friday 8:45 a.m. - 4 p.m. Covid protocols will be followed.

[michigandistrict.org](http://michigandistrict.org) | 888.225.2111