

August 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

## Lutheran Schools in the Pandemic and Beyond

by Greg Johnson, with introduction by Travis Grulke

Challenge, struggle, difficult, exhausting ... these are some of the words we heard from educators as they moved through last school year. Opportunity, perseverance, faith, blessed ... these are also words our educators shared as they recognized the way God was moving through our Lutheran schools during a year unlike any other. So as we begin a new school year, 'what does this mean' for our Lutheran schools? Greg Johnson, one of our Michigan District principals, begins

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to answer that question. He reminds us that the Good Lord uses all things (including a pandemic) for good, and this is especially true for our Lutheran schools! – *Travis Grulke, Assistant to the President - Superintendent of Schools, Michigan District, LCMS.*

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Gold extracted from the ground is often relatively high in quality even in its natural state. However, during the refining process, application of high temperatures to that gold brings forth an even greater purity, and a coveted byproduct emerges once the heat is removed. In a similar way, this illustration can be applied to Lutheran schools during the pandemic. The challenges of the pandemic were much like the heat of a refiner's fire that was applied to our educational ministries. This fire further refined Lutheran schools (probably in ways we do not fully understand yet) and produced an even higher quality, superior educational choice for parents and their children. In other words, the heat of the pandemic has proven to be a blessing that has further raised the quality and value of Lutheran schools. The pandemic was the catalyst of a refining process that brought positive change loaded with possibilities for future success and growth.

Lutheran schools, along with just about every institution in society, have had to meet many challenges brought about by the pandemic and have done so with a high degree of effectiveness and grace. Challenges—including lockdowns, distance learning, technology limitations, mitigation strategies, loss of quality instructional time, as well as reduced enrollment—have produced the heat that has been refining and stretching our educational ministries. Much like quality gold extracted from the ground and further refined by fire, Lutheran schools are being further refined by these challenges and, as a result, have become better at what they have always done well. Because of this and a determined willingness to meet these challenges head on, Lutheran schools now have the ability to provide a greater level of service, a higher quality of education, and better innovation and flexibility than ever before. Our schools need to continue to ride that wave of innovation and flexibility. Never have so many Lutheran schools been better positioned to move from good to great.

As we stand at the threshold of a new school year, it is important that we understand and build on the refining that has taken place with each of our individual ministries. Equipped with that understanding, Lutheran schools can begin to move forward applying the many innovations and new ways of teaching and learning that were acquired during the pandemic, as well as applying that knowledge to our marketing and promotional strategies.

While the pandemic has certainly claimed its share of victims, I do not believe Lutheran schools are counted among that group. In fact, I believe the opposite is likely true. Lutheran schools are better positioned for the future than they were before the pandemic. Families today are in desperate need of something they can have faith in, something they can count on, and a hope for their future. Lutheran schools share that message of hope in Christ with students and families each day, whether in a pandemic or not. I cannot help but be reminded of Joseph's proclamation, in Genesis 50, that what was intended for harm, God has intended for good (paraphrased). Let us not miss this opportunity to grow and improve our Lutheran schools for future success and stability. ■

*Greg Johnson is the principal at St. Michael, Portage.*

*This fire further refined Lutheran schools (probably in ways we do not fully understand yet) and produced an even higher quality, superior educational choice for parents and their children.*





Photos courtesy of St. Paul, Ann Arbor

# Growing for *Eternity*

by Rachel Potts

If you were to walk through the halls at St. Paul School in Ann Arbor during the 2020–2021 school year, you would have noticed that the school was a bit more full than usual. Preschool cubbies were overflowing with nap blankets, elementary racks were bursting with backpacks and gym shoes, and middle school halls were lined two deep with band instruments. If you peeked in the classroom windows, you would have seen students at every desk, desks spread from wall to wall, and computer screens with classmates joining from home. The classrooms were full. Wonderfully, comfortably full! More than 70 new students enrolled in St. Paul Ann Arbor's elementary and middle school classes for the 2020–2021 school year, and all but one class had a waiting list all year. This was the biggest increase in enrollment that the school has experienced in more than a decade. We were excited by this growth, and we knew that God was giving

our school and church a great opportunity. Classrooms were bustling, tuition was coming in, and people in the community were talking about us. All the numbers were increasing. But perhaps in addition to measuring growth in the number of new students, we should also use another metric. Perhaps we should also be measuring school growth by how our students and families grew in faith, love for God, and love for others.

A few years ago, a mom sat in my office after touring the middle school. She was a single mother of a teenage boy, and she had come to the U.S. to work at the University of Michigan. Bringing up a son by herself in a country far from home was challenging, and she was looking for a solid, safe school environment for him. *"Everyone at this school is very kind, and I know my son will learn much,"* she said. *"I want him to attend St. Paul."* I asked her if I could pray for her before she left. She paused. *"Yes. You may pray. But I will just listen. In my country, faith and the Bible are punished. I do not have a place in my heart for them right now. But I want faith for my son. I want him to learn the Bible and believe. Maybe someday I will be able to believe too."* Two years later, at her son's graduation from eighth grade, she stopped me. *"Mrs. Potts,"* she said excitedly. *"I am reading the Bible and it is changing my life!"* She continues to email me from time to time with stories of how God is working

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*I am reading the Bible and it is changing my life!*

# He *Makes* Me Lie Down

by Tyler Cronkright

A few weeks ago, I stood in the pulpit on Good Shepherd Sunday. I love preaching in traditional Lutheran churches because I enjoy the pulpit (keeps me in one place) and I get to wear my favorite stoles. Not to mention that the one I wore on this particular day is the one my wife says I look most handsome in. Put all of that together with meeting new friends and celebrating the Lord's Supper, and Sunday was absolutely wonderful. A preacher's delight.

I began preaching about Jesus, our good shepherd, laying his life down only to take it up again (John 10:18) and giving us comfort, rest, joy, forgiveness, and assurance of salvation through the water and blood that poured from his pierced side. I did my best to paint an eloquent picture of our good shepherd using arguably the most well-known verses of the Bible: Psalm 23. Our good shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures to rest, leads us beside still waters to drink and be refreshed, and restores our soul! I talked about how we are sheep (in more ways than one), in constant need of our shepherd.

And then I got to the part of the sermon that always challenges me: How can I get these people to think about their own lives, preparing them to hear the good news of the Gospel? So, I looked out at the congregation and asked:

*"Are you HIS sheep?"*

Not, *"How do you know you are his sheep?"* For that would be the terrible theology of what I call, "Jesus plus"—the theology

that caused Paul to breathe fiery passion down the necks of the Galatian church. I described the two indicators that Christ Jesus Himself says of his sheep. He says, *"My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). Sheep hear and sheep follow. They follow Christ. Among other things, it means following Christ when you do not know where he is leading you. It means adhering to Christ when you are not sure what his plan is. It means trusting Christ when you have no control.

It was then that I made this confession from the pulpit: I hate not having control. This is one of my bigger stumbling blocks as a Christian, and probably yours too. It is precisely why I absolutely cannot stand riding in the car while someone else drives. I desire to have control over my life, my decisions, and the route that I choose to get wherever it is that I want to go. When I confessed this, tongue in cheek, I had no idea that God was smiling from ear to ear. *"We are about to change that, my son,"* I imagine He said.

## No Control

The next day I tested positive for Covid-19. Throughout the afternoon of being at Family of God on Sunday, I began developing a very sore throat, something that is fairly common for a preacher who gave five sermons over the course of a weekend. I did not think much of it. Until I got home that night and could barely talk. I told my wife that I was not going to panic.

People get sore throats all the time, after all. But unlike my outer self, my inner self was shrieking at the top of his lungs.

There was so much to do this week! Our Family of God staff was traveling to Fort Wayne to meet our new vicar. My wife and I were walking through our new house and signing all the papers! I was playing golf with my dad. And the highlight of the week was that I had the privilege and honor to officiate my sister's wedding, celebrating with our family and friends. There was no way I could test positive for Covid. God would not allow it.

But He did. Pastor Hill, his wife Susan, Alex, Deacon John, my wife, and I all tested positive within the week.

There is a saying that perhaps you are familiar with: *"If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."* That was me. *"God, I have all of these things to do. I'm going to need you to do X, Y, and Z so that I can get these things done."*

God does not work like that. He does quite the opposite. He works according to His purposes and His purposes only. It does not matter what we want. It does not matter what plans we have made. If it is not aligned with His will, He will crumple it up like a bad homework assignment and throw it in the garbage.

While God was tossing my plans away, I was very fortunate. I did not have a "bad case" of Covid-19. Not like others that I know. Physically, the toughest thing that I battled with was a nasty sore throat, preventing me from swal-



lowing normally and speaking. Other than that, being chronically fatigued was the worst. But none of that compares to sitting at home watching my baby sister get married to the man of her dreams—the man that my dad and I have covered in prayer for years, trusting that God would bring him to Shelby at the perfect time. That was physically painful, and I made sure that God knew how upset I was about it. For me, it was further proof that Covid impacts more than just our health, but that is a discussion for another time.

In the following two and a half weeks, my wife and I were banished to our small apartment. It was just us and the cats. We slept, we ate soup, we slept, we did a little walking in various parks nearby, and we slept some more. We could not see anyone, go anywhere, or really do anything we wanted to. We missed our families, our friends, our church, our classrooms. Everything was out of our control. Everything. Especially once we started feeling better. That was one of the more difficult things to cope with—feeling normal and still being asked to stay home while the world continued to turn around us.

### Why?

So, why? That is the question we have all been asking on a regular basis for the last year and a half. I cannot speak for you in your situations. But I think I can confidently speak for me, in light of the last few weeks.

As the good shepherd, Jesus is always looking out for his sheep. He leads, he protects, he comforts, he anoints, he provides, and he restores. This is what I preached about right before going into quarantine. Jesus does all of this for us. But there is a particular

word in Psalm 23:1–2 that really stands out to me as I reflect on it:

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He MAKES me lie down in green pastures.”*

He makes me lie down. Like a little kid who will not sit still, so mom or dad says, “nap time!” I am that little kid. I always must be doing something. It is very hard for me to take a day and do nothing. I have places to go, people to see, ministry to do, errands to run. The list goes on and on. So much to the point that, when my wife and I go on vacation, it usually takes me two or three days (sometimes more) to fully relax. By then, though, it is time to go home and get back to the grind.

As much as I wanted to do all the things on my mile-long list, God wanted me to rest. He willed for me to rest. And since I have such a hard time with that—yes, he made me rest. He picked me up under the armpits and put me in my room. He ensured that I could not go anywhere for two and a half weeks. Rest.

While most of the Family of God staff was away recovering, one of my biggest concerns was if the ministry would be able to continue in our absence. But God was not worried. “Rest,” he whispered to us. God used our volunteers and our supporting congregations to step up in a mighty way to ensure the Word was proclaimed and the Sacrament was administered. My wife and I got to spend time together talking about a variety of subjects from theology, to Tiger baseball, to our future together. This was a gift we did not know we needed. I

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“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He MAKES me lie down in green pastures.”





# Michigan District, LCMS Church

## *Outfitting its Neighbors*

by Jeff Heisner



February 13 was the coldest night of the year in Mt. Clemens. Despite the freezing temperatures, a fire blazed through the Holiday Garden Apartments in town. It was so bad that many residents were forced to escape by jumping out of their windows. The complex was completely gutted but, by the grace of God, no one lost their life. Months later, boarded up windows, burnt shingles, and uprooted trees are left. All residents were displaced, and everything was lost. It is a difficult time for the families, who are not blessed with the means to replace all their clothing and valuables.

Ron Kuczera, the Local Missions Coordinator for Shepherd's Gate, Shelby Twp., saw the story on the news and felt compelled to act. The tragedy hit close to home for Kuczera: *"There was a fire in my house when I was in my early 20s and, when I saw the story, it really took me back to where I was,"* he said. He talked with the Good Shepherd Coalition to find out how the church could help.

Kuczera and Shepherd's Gate decided to put together a program called *Outfit Your Neighbors*. Shepherd's Gate held a clothing drive to help the victims through the summer months. They purchased new shorts, shirts, and summer clothes for all 22 residents.

The generosity from the members was abounding. It is not just a t-shirt or pair

of jeans came in, but entire wardrobes were replaced. Drop-offs continued through early June at Shepherd's Gate and then everything went to the Macomb County Fire Department, where they were given to the residents at a special ceremony on June 11.

Having seen all possessions gone in one night, Kuczera empathizes with the neighbors and wants them to know that people care. *"It is tough, I feel for them, and I know it is just stuff, but we want to replace that stuff and we want them to feel loved and supported by the community."* ■

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



Photo by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS

# God's Children are God's Disciples

Michigan District Launches Stewardship Curriculum

*"... but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).*

**T**he Michigan District is excited to share with you a new stewardship learning opportunity designed to teach children that they are children of God, disciples in an active relationship with Him every day and in every way.

We want our children to learn ALL of God's Word, especially that we are sinners who have been set free from our condemnation by Jesus Christ, our Savior! We also want them to know what that means: "I am a child of God!" We have been given that new identity in Jesus and are entrusted to live out that identity as His disciples, stewarding our lives and all that God has created and placed around us.

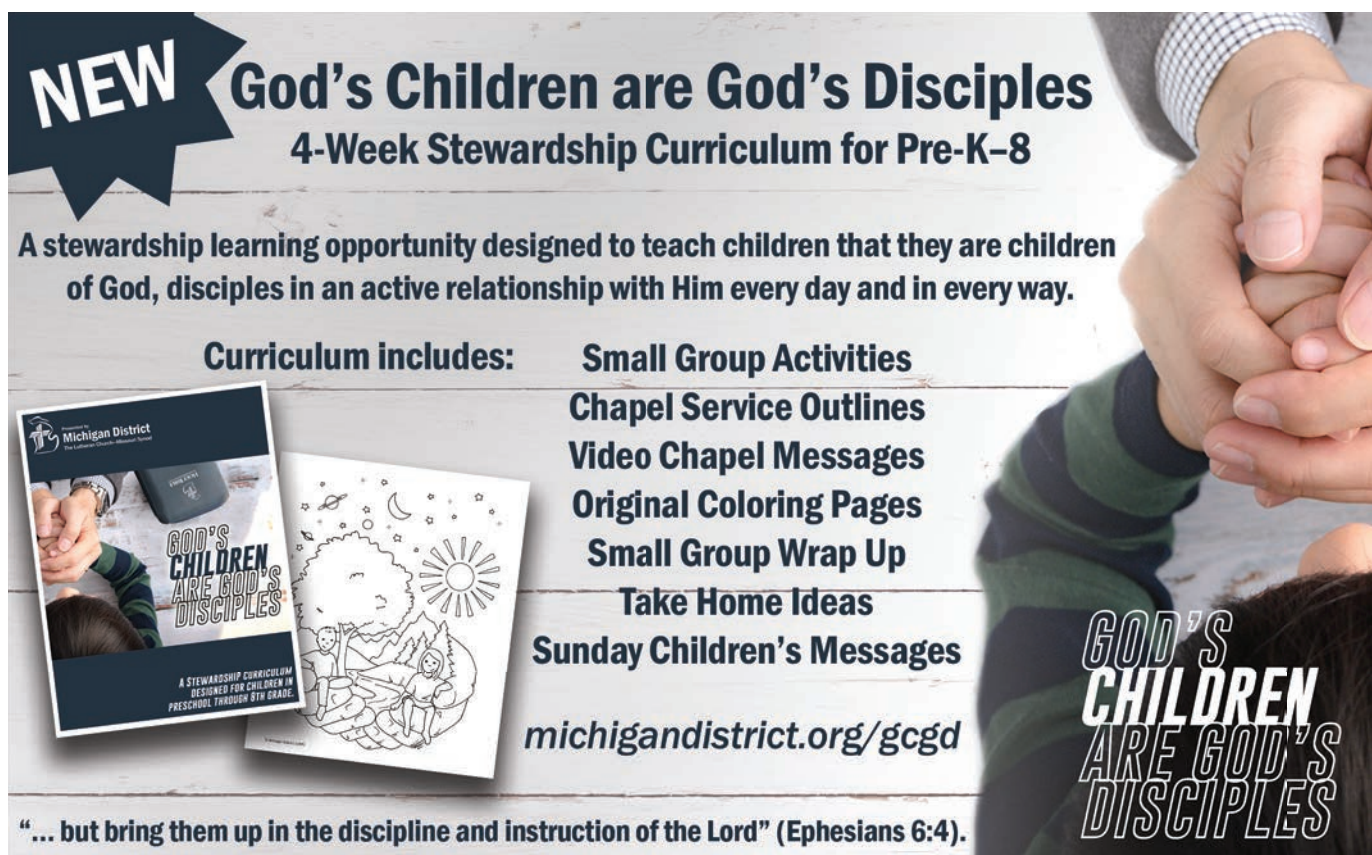
These materials can be used in day school and preschool settings, children's ministries, weekday classes, or Confirmation instruction. They have been outlined as a four-week emphasis, designed to fit into your schedule. The packet could be used in successive

weeks, once a month for four successive months, or other. Weekly emphases include: I am a child of God ... I have my identity in Jesus; Since I am God's child ... I want to be Jesus' disciple; Since I am God's child ... I want to take care of myself and others; and Since I am God's child ... I want to take care of God's world.

It is not our intent for you to say: *"Oh no! Here's another thing to try and fit into our busy learning and curriculum schedule!"* Instead, we have developed these materials to assist you in this important area of teaching the full counsel of God's Word as it applies to living as a child of God.

Included is also a four-week series of children's messages for worship services that can be used to supplement and teach this important concept in a different context.

To learn more or to order this free resource, visit [michigandistrict.org/gcgd](http://michigandistrict.org/gcgd). ■



**NEW** **God's Children are God's Disciples**  
**4-Week Stewardship Curriculum for Pre-K-8**

**A stewardship learning opportunity designed to teach children that they are children of God, disciples in an active relationship with Him every day and in every way.**

**Curriculum includes:**

- Small Group Activities
- Chapel Service Outlines
- Video Chapel Messages
- Original Coloring Pages
- Small Group Wrap Up
- Take Home Ideas
- Sunday Children's Messages

[michigandistrict.org/gcgd](http://michigandistrict.org/gcgd)

**GOD'S CHILDREN ARE GOD'S DISCIPLES**

*"... but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).*



AUGUST 2021

# New CEF Technology Grants Help Ministries Connect Online to Keep Sharing Jesus

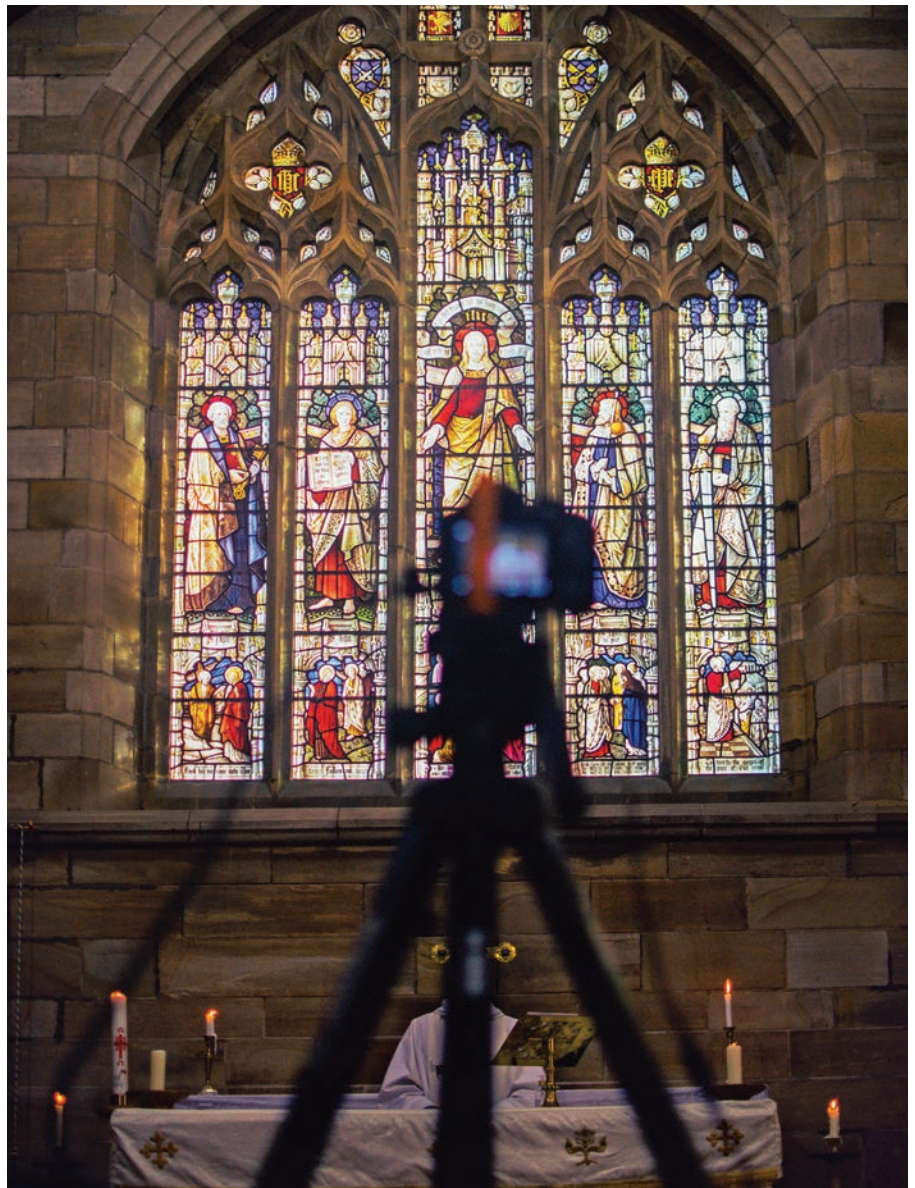
Earlier this year, the February edition of Spotlight highlighted Church Extension Fund's recent grant programs and how they've enabled Michigan District congregations and ministries to meet important needs.

Spotlight readers learned how churches have used CEF grants to improve their facilities' appearance and enhance their "curb appeal". Other examples told of CEF grants providing funds to Lutheran schools seeking to upgrade their equipment, facilities, and curriculum.

We especially shined the light on CEF's Security Enhancement Grant & Loan Program which concluded early this year. This urgently needed program blessed more than 200 Lutheran ministries in Michigan with a total of over \$450,000 to improve the security of their facilities and increase the safety of their members, students, workers and guests. We salute the many ministries that took advantage of such an exceptional opportunity.

## The Tech We Need—and How to Apply It

What challenges the past year-and-a-half have presented to Lutheran ministries—and how assertively and creatively our ministries have responded in this time of crisis!



*CEF's new grants aim to help EQUIP our churches, schools and service organizations with the technology updates they need, while helping them continue to CONNECT people to Jesus through the technology's use.*



“As much as anything,” says Andy Sohn, CEF’s Vice President of Marketing and Relations, “the pandemic era has demonstrated how important it is for our churches and schools to have high-quality, up-to-date technology. Tech has proven absolutely crucial in enabling us to reach out to others and to connect people with the love of Jesus.”

To help keep up with technology needs, CEF now offers two grants in one! The **Equip+Connect Grant & Loan program** is available to eligible ministries until March 31, 2022. The **Equip Grant** provides up to \$2,500 per eligible ministry for purchasing new technology or for enhancing existing equipment. “This,” says Sohn, “can serve as a technological lifeline.”

Think how quickly technology changes. As Sohn notes, “A new camera, tablet or app can become obsolete in record time. And all the while, the pressure to keep up intensifies. We’ve entered a time when the abilities to hold virtual services and events and conduct online classroom instruction aren’t just optional, they’re expected.”

It’s not so much the technology itself, it’s how we apply it. To this end, CEF also now offers the **Connect Grant**, providing up to \$500 to cover expenses for church workers who attend instructional programs, in-person or virtually, to enhance their tech skills. “These two grants,” Sohn says, “will help supply our ministries with the equipment and abilities they need to keep bringing people to Jesus in an increasingly online world.”

As with CEF grants past, a special low-rate loan will be available to ministries whose new technology needs exceed the dollar amount available through the grant.

### **A Shared Commitment to Share**

Per Sohn, “This is the third time that CEF has offered a grant for technology in the past 15 years. It’s a reflection of our commitment to share our blessings with those who are committed to sharing the gospel with our neighbors throughout Michigan.”

There are separate applications for the Equip and Connect Grants. You’ll find them, along with eligibility requirements, terms, and conditions, at [www.mi-cef.org](http://www.mi-cef.org). Or consult with your church’s CEF Representative for more information about the program.

Does your church have a CEF Rep? If not, would you serve in this vital



*CEF’s two grants will help supply ministries with the equipment and abilities they need to keep bringing people to Jesus in an increasingly online world.*

position? Contact Andy Sohn or Bill Burmeister at 800-242-3944 to learn how you, as a trained CEF Rep, can help keep your fellow church members informed of new CEF offerings.



*“We’ve entered a time when the abilities to hold virtual services and events and conduct online classroom instruction aren’t just optional, they’re expected.”*

**Andy Sohn**

Vice President of Marketing & Relations  
Church Extension Fund



**Church Extension Fund**

Church Extension Fund ■ Michigan District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-3098 ■ [www.mi-cef.org](http://www.mi-cef.org)

Offices: 800-242-3944

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### Sarah's Story by Penny Armbruster

Sarah\* has 2 children and was currently 9 weeks pregnant. She decided to look for prenatal care early in her pregnancy this time around as last time she was unable to get prenatal care and had to resort to showing up at the emergency room when she found herself in labor.

Sarah contacted the Luke Clinic after being turned away from 14 other clinics—because she did not have health insurance, she was refused care time and time again.

When she called, she was reassured by staff that the clinic would love to take care of her and the baby on the very next clinic day. Sadly, Sarah's home caught fire and burned to the ground that week—leaving her with nothing.

She and her extended family found themselves placed in various different shelters throughout the metro area. Over the following days, clinic staff remained in contact with her and was able to offer her support, encouragement, and transportation assistance to get to our next clinic. The mobile unit went out and staff offered to connect with her so that they could drop off supplies and check in on her family.

This is just one story of many. Luke Clinic patients face many barriers to accessing prenatal care—from lack of reliable or affordable transportation to lack of childcare, as well as lack of health insurance.

The Luke Clinic is a free clinic; however, through a partnership with Access Health, many of the patients are able to sign up for Medicaid. This provides them

with free transportation to appointments and the ability to utilize the health system for additional antenatal testing ultrasound and delivery.

God has always provided a way for the Luke Clinic to care for all of its patients. Most recently, a staff member covered the cost for one of the clinic's patient's lab bills. The staff never ceases to be amazed by His provision through its many donors, including those who are a part of the Michigan District's **Here We Stand** Campaign, and partners such as the University of Michigan Health System who take care of the clinic's undocumented and uninsured patients.

*Penny Armbruster is the Interim Executive Director of the Luke Clinic.*

*The Luke Clinic is one of several Acts2Enterprise (A2E) urban innovative missional ministries proudly supported through the **Here We Stand** Campaign of the Michigan District, LCMS. To date, nearly \$3.9 million has been donated for Innovative Missional Ministry. To become a financial supporter of the A2E Innovative Ministries, please visit [michigandistrict.org/herewestand](http://michigandistrict.org/herewestand).*



**Here We Stand**

\*Name changed.



God has always provided  
a way for the Luke Clinic to  
care for all of its patients.



### Rose Parade Volunteers and LHM Resources

#### Rose Parade

The Lutheran Hour Ministries float theme for 2022 is *Jesus Teaches*. All LCMS members are invited to decorate the float for the 2022 Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade on December 31, 2021. This is a tremendous way to participate and witness that *Jesus Teaches* to millions on the parade route and on national television.

Cost is based on occupancy. If you register by July 30, you can save \$50 off the tour price.

The tour package includes:

- Five nights at the Holiday Inn West Covina, Calif. A first-class hotel within walking distance to shopping and restaurants.
- Complimentary hotel parking.
- Breakfast daily (subject to Coronavirus restrictions).
- Three days 'hands on' float preparation and decorating with Petal Pushers.
- Four days round trip private coach group transfer from hotel to float decorating pavilion and to the Rose Parade.
- Rose parade ticket in preferred grandstand seating.
- Complimentary Petal Pusher sweatshirt
- All city and hotel taxes.

Register now at [christiantravelplanners.com](http://christiantravelplanners.com).

#### Project Connect Booklet Bundles

LHM has PC Booklet Bundles, perfect for PC Junior Racks for your community. All bundles are \$20 each, include 10 booklets, and can be ordered at [shoplhm.org](http://shoplhm.org). Four new PC Bundles are now available.

- Funeral Home/Hospital Bundle: *Prayer When You Don't Know What to Say; Forgiveness is a Choice; What Happens When I Die?; and Grief*
- Real Topics/Real People Bundle: *Managing Your Money; Journey Through the Rat Race; Depression; and children's booklet, The Bully.*
- School/Day Care Bundle: *Helping Your Child—Welcome Others; Grow Through Faith; Have a Relationship with God; and children's booklet, Learning to Pray.*
- Faith Sharing Bundle: *My Digital Voice—An Introduction to Digital Conversation Pledge; How to Talk About Your Faith—An Introduction to the Spiritual Conversation Curve; and children's booklets, Welcome and Sharing Your Faith.*



## Your Investment Builds Schools

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

*“CEF made things extremely easy. There were no hoops to jump through. They have a mission-minded viewpoint, and it is very pleasing to know that they are not just a lender, but a partner in what we are doing.”*

— Joel Keup,  
Director of Facilities and Safety at  
Peace Lutheran School, Saginaw



Church Extension Fund

Office:

**800-242-3944**

24/7 Interest Rates:

**800-232-7313**

Website:

**[www.mi-cef.org](http://www.mi-cef.org)**



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### Best Practices Heartland Hosted by St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

The Best Practices Heartland conference will be held at St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth on September 19–21, 2021. Many have been hard at work to make sure that everything is in place for a fantastic experience for all who are able to attend.

Plans include plenary speakers and delicious meals with a Frankenmuth flair. The conference will take place in the St. Lorenz Worship and Event Center, its historic church building, its sprawling school, and in the beautiful Church Grove. Arrangements have been made with local hotels to provide excellent accommodations at very reasonable prices.

Remember: one of the overriding principles of Best Practices is that nobody pays to attend and nobody gets paid to speak. Registration and meals are free. Participants are responsible only for their travel and lodging expenses (and any souvenirs they buy downtown!).

Register today at [stlorenz.org/ministries/best-practices/](http://stlorenz.org/ministries/best-practices/).

### The Mission Focus of Council of Lutheran Women

In 1964, a group of pioneering women convinced the Lutheran Center Association to create a federation of Lutheran women's organizations called The Council of Lutheran Women (CLW). Understanding that mission is both international and domestic, they were determined to band together to support needs in the Detroit metropolitan area. Much of this is unchanged today as CLW continues to welcome women from congregations, LWML zones, Lutheran High School Association schools, Concordia Guild, and RSOs to accomplish local service projects.

Intrigued? The Council's upcoming "Mission Focus" event is designed to familiarize women with opportunities to volunteer and support many local ministries. Hosted at Faith, Troy, all women are encouraged to attend the event on Monday, September 27, 2021. Registration opens at 8:45 a.m. and the event concludes after lunch. Register today at [clwmichigan.com](http://clwmichigan.com).

Following the Mission Focus event, CLW will conduct its fall business meeting from 1–3 p.m. This meeting is open to event participants.



### The Receptive Life, a Women's Retreat

In his book, *Sanctuary of the Soul*, Richard Foster writes: "*we have been in a far country. It has been a country of noise and hurry and crowds. And God is welcoming us home—home to peace and serenity and joy.*"

Amid the noise, hurry, and crowds, peace, serenity, and joy seem elusive. Jesus invited His apostles to "*come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest*" (Mark 6:31). Many of us can relate to the apostles' reality. Our Lord's grace abounds, and His invitation is for each of us as well.

On November 5–7, 2021, a weekend opportunity has been planned for women to come away from the busyness and distractions of life and find rest. Cheryl Spaulding of Grace, Romeo, Morning Star Ministries, and counselor available during pastors' wives' conferences, is hosting a women's retreat at the Lake Huron Retreat Center. This year's retreat theme is "The Receptive Life." All women are invited to attend.

For more retreat information or to register, visit [morningstarministries.net](http://morningstarministries.net).

### Join the Bible Translation Movement

Many people in congregations do not know about the ongoing need for Bible translation. Millions are still without Scripture in a language they understand. Lutheran Bible Translators partners with individuals, organizations, and language communities all over the world to put God's Word into the hands of those who do not have a Bible in their language.

Join the Bible translation movement in 2021 by observing Lutheran Bible Translators Sunday on September 26, 2021. The goal for 2021 is to have 120+ congregations celebrating by using all or some of the following resources: sermon (by Dr. Reed Lessing, Concordia University St. Paul); children's message; Sunday school and adult Bible study materials; service elements; bulletin insert; graphics; and videos.

To learn more or to download resources, visit [lbt.org](http://lbt.org).





## Special Recognition

### Deacon Commencement

In June, Trinity, Fenton hosted the annual commencement service for deacon students who have completed the course of study provided by the Michigan District. Eight men commenced and are serving in a variety of ways in their respective congregations under the supervision of their pastors.

Based solely on the needs of their congregations, only one deacon is serving as a “licensed deacon for Word and Sacrament ministry” at this time. The others are “credentialed deacons,” serving as Bible class leaders, evangelists, visitation ministers, and social ministry/community engagement leaders.

Congratulations to all these men who have reached this milestone in their preparations for ongoing ministry!

For more information about the Deacon/Ministry Assistant Program of study through our Michigan School of Missional Formation, please visit [michigandistrict.org/missional](http://michigandistrict.org/missional).

### Trinity Monroe Installs Pastors

In June, Rev. Daniel A. Potts was installed as senior pastor and Rev. Dennis C. Mann was installed as interim assisting pastor at Trinity, Monroe. Rev. Potts has served as Trinity’s assistant pastor since 2014. In April 2021, Trinity extended a call to him to be senior pastor. A native of Washington, Mo., Rev. Potts attended college in southern California and received an M.Div. degree from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in interdisciplinary leadership from Creighton University.

As his first official act as senior pastor, Rev. Potts installed Pastor Mann as interim assisting pastor. Rev. Mann has served congregations in Minnesota, Indiana, and Ohio during his 30-year ministry. He has been serving as Trinity’s visitation pastor. He is a graduate of Concordia University St. Paul and earned an MA degree in religion from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.



Photo courtesy of Trinity, Monroe

Front row (l-r) the Revs: Robert Auxter, Kyle Jones, Daniel Potts, Dennis Mann, Lee Cullen, and Dean Davenport. Back Row (l-r): the Revs: Curtis Garland, Jeffrey Heimsoth, Robert Marshall, Kevin Mann, and Mark Witte.



Photo courtesy of Rich Lewis, Faith, Bridgeport

Pictured l-r are Rev. Dr. Rob Kasper, Alfred Renard, Gregory Rotter, Mark Sabourin, William Bible, James Burgee, James Phillips, Joe Thomas, Kenneth Kerouac.

### Sparks Ordination and Installation

April 11, 2021 was a great day in the life of Atonement, Dearborn and for her people. On this day, Rev. Steven E. Sparks (pictured 1st row) was ordained and installed as a specific ministry pastor. Prior to this date, Rev. Sparks was a licensed deacon serving Immanuel, Dearborn Heights (3 years) and credentialed deacon serving Our Shepherd, Birmingham (2 years) prior to accepting the call to Atonement.

Members and guests plus 15 Lutheran clergy from surrounding congregations gathered to celebrate this historic event. A festival dinner was held following the service. Rev. Sparks is the seventh pastor shepherding the parish in the 95 years of its existence.



Photo courtesy of Atonement, Dearborn

## Deneen Installed

On June 27, Rev. Chris “Critter” Deneen (pictured front row, 3rd from left) was installed as Associate Pastor at Our Savior, Lansing. The worship service included a message from Rev. Micah Greiner, uncle to Rev. Deneen’s wife Lauren, and the Rite of Installation was led by Michigan District President and former pastor of Our Savior, Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier.

Pastor Chris grew up knowing he wanted to be a Pastor. It was actually at his kindergarten graduation that he announced before the school and others that, when he grew up, he didn’t want to be a professional athlete, an astronaut, or a rockstar, but a pastor. An opportunity to tell people about Jesus and only work one day a week? Who wouldn’t want that career? As he got older, he realized that it was a job that took more than one day a week, and was actually filled with hurts, pains, and heartaches. But just as often as there are those, there are highs, celebrations, jubilees, and seeing God work in wonderful ways.

While attending Concordia University Ann Arbor, he took on a Theological Languages major and continued to grow in faith and knowledge, confirming his yearning to go into the ministry. After graduating from CUAA in 2017, he



Photo courtesy of Our Savior, Lansing

enrolled at Concordia Seminary St. Louis in St. Louis, Mo. His vicarage was at Peace Lutheran Ministries in Antigo, Wisc. His interests and focus in ministry include outreach, evangelism, and he has a heart for school ministry.

It was at CUAA that he met his wife, Lauren. They were married on 6/23/2018. Just over a year later, at the end of his first week in vicarage, their daughter, Ida Jane Deneen, was born.

Rev. Bill Wangelin and the members of the church and school community of Our Savior, Lansing are excited to welcome Pastor Chris, his wife Lauren and their daughter Ida to learn, live, and share Christ together in ministry.

## LeClair Ordained and Installed

Rev. Timothy LeClair (pictured third from left) was ordained and installed at Family of God (FOG), Detroit as a specific ministry pastor on Sunday, June 26, 2021.

Pastor Tim’s journey towards becoming an LCMS pastor began when he was a member of Trinity, Clinton Township. He joined a Bible study and met Rev. Jim Hill, founding pastor of FOG, and began serving as a volunteer at what was then a mission church. He investigated the Deacon program and in 2010 became a licensed lay deacon. He served at FOG under the supervision of Rev. Hill and later began the colloquy route to become a special ministry pastor.

Pastor Tim will be serving as a “street pastor” as FOG has been serving the lost, the homeless, and the addicted just a few miles from FOG. He will teach, serve, and build relationships with them. These are the early steps of forming another church on that side of town.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Dean Davenport

## Beckett Ordained and Installed

Garrick “Ricky” Sinclair Beckett (pictured center 1st row) was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor at Zion, Mt. Pleasant on Sunday June 27, 2021. It was a blessing to have some of the pastors who mentored and shepherded him participate in the service, including his home pastor, Rev. Steven Newton of Grace, Canton and Rev. Dr. Charles Schulz from Concordia University Ann Arbor. In all, 14 pastors were present to lay hands and welcome our new brother into the ministry. Pastor Beckett’s primary work at Zion will be with the campus ministry at Christ The King Lutheran Chapel on the campus of Central Michigan University.



Photo courtesy of Anne Bakker



## Growing for Eternity continued from page 3

in her life and the life of her son. Her faith has been contagious. A family member was secretly baptized in his home recently and looks forward to the day when he can come to the U.S. and worship with her. Her faith, and that of her son and family, is growing because of a seed planted at St. Paul.

Many of St. Paul's new students heard the message of God's love for the first time this past school year. Their faith is taking root. At one point, one of our new dads posted on Facebook. When he and his wife were first exploring St. Paul last August, they had several questions about the religion curriculum. They said that their children had only been to church at Christmas, and they were concerned that they would struggle to understand and keep up with what they were being taught. But several months later, the seeds planted at St. Paul were taking root. In the Facebook post, the father shared that a family friend had passed away, and they were struggling as they grieved the loss. The post said that they were "not especially religious," but they had decided to send the children to a Christian school this year. They were trying to explain their friend's death to the children when their son spoke up. "We learned at school that when someone dies, there's heaven," he said, "and Jesus is there."

Will we continue to experience growth in the number of students attending St. Paul? We hope so, but it is hard to say. Many factors are influencing this increase, and we do not know what the years ahead hold. But God does, and we are eager and excited to follow his plan. Most of the preschool through eighth grade classes are already full for the 2021–2022 school year, and we receive new applications every day. If these trends continue, we will need to consider how to accommodate growth in the years and decades ahead. But more important than the number of students we have is the faith of our students. God has put us in a place to share the message of His forgiveness and love with many, many children and families. He has called St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor to help our students and families grow in faith and love for God and each other. That kind of growth will last for eternity. ■

*Rachel Potts is the Admissions Counselor for St. Paul, Ann Arbor.*



Photo courtesy of St. Paul, Ann Arbor

## He Makes Me Lie Down continued from page 5

got to read books! I was able to study my Bible without worrying about going somewhere. I was even able to watch *The Godfather* for the first time.

It is funny. When things are taken out of your control, you stop worrying. You let God do what God wants to do. It may not always be what you want, but it is always best. Always. You let the One who has promised to never leave you, nor forsake you, and to always be faithful to you—you let Him run the show. After all, it was God who spoke the world into existence without our consent. It was God in Christ who spoke to Lazarus and raised him from the dead without our consent. It is the same God who speaks words of forgiveness daily to each and every one of us without our consent. God always was, always is, and always will be in control.

### As for you?

Well, you rest in Him. You listen to the voice of your Shepherd. It's that voice that calls you His own child. He's got this. ■

*Rev. Tyler Cronkright is the specific ministry pastor at Family of God in Southwest Detroit. He serves alongside many volunteers and walks with drug addicts, alcoholics, the homeless, and those in poverty. He started serving as a student intern in 2013 and hasn't left since.*



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# Calls and Roster Update

## ORDAINED

### Calls Accepted

Rev. Dr. Charles Foster (Columbus, IN) to Sr., Immanuel, Macomb  
 Rev. Adam Kosberg (Charleston, SC) to New Hope, Hudsonville  
 Rev. Daniel Potts (Monroe) to Sr., Trinity, Monroe  
 Rev. Roderick Schultz (Belleville) to St. Luke, Clinton Twp.  
 Rev. Jon Trinklein (Shelby Twp.) to Associate, St. John, Rochester

### Status and Title Change

Rev. Arthur Bode (Gould City) to Emeritus  
 Rev. Tyler Carter (Grand Rapids) to Candidate  
 Rev. Merelyn Snider (Stockbridge) to Emeritus

### Transferred Into District

Rev. Peter Ahlersmeyer (Fort Wayne, IN) from Indiana District

### Transferred Out of District

Rev. Bert Thompson (Tomah, WI) to South Wisconsin District

## COMMISSIONED

### Calls Accepted

Barger, Anna (Concordia, Fort Wayne, IN) to St. Paul, Flint  
 Eberhard, Charlotte (Our Shepherd, Avon, IN) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth  
 Fanta, Amy (Mount Calvary, Detroit) to Camp RD, Inc.  
 Gilson, Grace (St. Peter's, Big Rapids) to St. John, Rochester  
 Greve, Timothy (Colorado Luth HS Assoc, Parker, CO) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (North)  
 Guenther, Amy (Concordia, Seward, NE) to Peace, Saginaw  
 Guse, Paul (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to St. John, Bay City  
 Hinck, Barbara (Reinstated) to St. Matthew, Westland  
 List, Katherine (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Our Savior, Lansing  
 Loren, John (Concordia, Austin, TX) to Trinity, Paw Paw  
 Osborne, Matthew (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Cross of Christ, Bloomfield Hills  
 Parrish, Elizabeth (Mount Calvary, Detroit) to Camp RD, Inc.  
 Pett, Ellen (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Immanuel, Bay City  
 Rohde, Molly (Candidate) to St. Peter's, Richmond  
 Rosin, Aaron (Peace, Shelby Township) to St. Paul's, Munster, IN  
 Schimm, Peter (Valley LHSA, Phoenix, AZ) to St. John, Bay City  
 Schurig, Kathy (Candidate) to Peace, Shelby Township  
 Wilke, Christian (Valley Lutheran, Saginaw) to Lutheran North, Houston, TX  
 Wright, Blake (Trinity, Clinton Township) to Holy Cross, Lake Mary, FL

### Change of Status

Annas, Michelle (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Emeritus  
 Bira, Carolyn, (Holy Cross, Flushing) to Emeritus  
 Brand, Susan (Trinity, Traverse City) to Emeritus  
 Clements, Taylor (Immanuel, Macomb) to Candidate  
 Kooi, Patti (St. John's, Grand Haven) to Emeritus  
 Neumeyer, Dennis (Immanuel, Saginaw) to Emeritus  
 Otto, Jane (St. Peter, Macomb) to Emeritus  
 Roth, Sarah (St. Mark, Battle Creek) to Candidate

### Transferred Into District

Benter, Cassandra (Nebraska District) to St. John, Rochester  
 Heins, Joseph (Pacific Southwest District) to Immanuel, Sebawaing  
 Lorenzen, Micah (Texas District) to LHSA, Rochester Hills

### Transferred Out of District

Wright, Blake (Trinity, Clinton Township) to SELC District

### Resigned From the Roster

Seevers, Devin  
 Shaffer, John

### Called Home

List, Rose

### School Closings

Sand Lake, Resurrection Preschool

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)

## AUGUST 2021

- 2-4 Principals Conference  
Higgins Lake
- 7-8 Here We Ride Virtual & In Person  
Zion, Bay City (August 7 only)
- 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  
Crystal Mountain, Thompsonville
- 19 Deacon/Supervising Pastors Conference  
Location TBD
- 31-9/1 Circuit Visitors Fall Conference  
Ann Arbor

## 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

## OCTOBER 2021

- 10 State Cross Country Meet  
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 10-12 All Pastors Conference  
Shanty Creek Resort, Bellaire
- 19 Board of Directors Meeting  
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 28 New Church Workers Conference  
Concordia University Ann Arbor

## GET EQUIPPED

FOR EFFECTIVE GOSPEL MINISTRY

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