

September 2021

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IN TOUCH

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

HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

Post Pandemic Ponderings

by Robert Kasper

The smell of warm cedar in the quiet cottage had Pastor Shipley drowsy as he sat in an overstuffed chair in the sunshine pouring through a full-wall bay window that looked out onto a boat dock and the small fishing lake beyond. He said a brief prayer of thanks to God for the generosity of the Morgan family who had gifted him and his wife with a free week at their lakefront retreat. This retreat gave him the space and the privilege to process ...

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IN TOUCH

Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, President
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Like every pastor he knew, and like most of our society, Pastor Shipley was exhausted by the 15+ months of pandemic panic caused by COVID-19. It wasn't physical exhaustion so much as mental/emotional and spiritual exhaustion from trying to care for and lead his congregation through an ever-changing array of guidelines, and interpretations of guidelines, and differences of opinions regarding the guidelines and their interpretation and application, along with the emotions attending the several opinions about the guidelines and their interpretation and applications, etc. Just to reflect on it caused a physical response as his joints ached.

The warm sun felt good.

The silence was welcome.

He could pray. He could ponder. He could rest ... mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually ... in the grace of God in Jesus that he knew was available and ever-present.

What had he learned through the pandemic shutdown? His drowsiness dissipated as he sensed the "still, small voice" inviting him to engage in rest-filled contemplation. He grabbed his handy pad of paper and jotted several quick items for which he was thankful through the pandemic's most intense period:

He had learned that:

- He is not a tele-evangelist, but he is capable of communicating God's Word via internet.
- The Internet will/must continue to be an essential part of ministry/mission going forward.
- Several new leaders stepped up to initiate listening groups and study groups on Zoom using recorded sermons and Bible studies. That was

pretty great! So, technically, more small groups existed than before!

- The congregation's Board of Directors can have very effective Zoom meetings and take care of lots of details in a much shorter block of time monthly.
- God provided financially for His Church through His faithful people ... and even older members learned how to use electronic giving!
- Members are most willing to make caring phone calls to fellow members and neighbors. More contacts were made in the last year than any year in his tenure as pastor. And because more people stepped up to make calls, no one had an overload of responsibility.
- Hymns and songs of praise aren't much fun without a congregation to join their voices in the celebration. Words are still good, but something is lacking.
- Some members felt comfortable inviting friends and extended family members to listen in on the worship services! Several people are on the list for Adult Instruction class now!
- Celebrating the Lord's Supper isn't just about receiving the elements of Christ's Body and Blood, as important as that is. It's also about the "communion of saints" or the community of our common confession of Christ.
- Only about 60% of the regular attendees from before COVID have returned to in-person worship even though the doors are completely open now.

“Only about 60% of the regular attendees from before COVID have returned to in-person worship even though the doors are completely open now.”

That thought jarred him. He had known that little tidbit of demographic detail before as he and other pastors had compared notes a few weeks ago at their summer golf outing; but now he was led to consider the matter more closely.

Why should God's people physically assemble in the sanctuary to worship God together and receive His good gifts through His Word and Sacraments? Why not just continue to listen in from the comfort of their homes via the Internet as we encouraged them to do for so many months, especially if they were at risk regarding their health?

Before Shipley completed writing out the questions, three passages of Scripture came to mind: Acts 2:42, Hebrews 1:1–3, and Hebrews 10:24–25.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer” Acts 2:42

Here the marks of the birthing Church are listed:

1. **The Word of God** (apostles’ teaching)
2. **The fellowship** (Koinonia: shared concern, mutual support physically/emotionally/spiritually, and shared purpose/mission)

“We are both *privileged and obligated* to physically/emotionally/spiritually “bear one another’s burdens””

3. The Lord’s Supper (The breaking of bread ... some may see this as only the sharing meals together but ...)

4. Prayer for and with one another.

- We can certainly teach via the Internet but generally the communication is “one-way only.”
- True Koinonia is missing without sharing space and gathering physically together.
- The Lord’s Supper by its very nature is very “corporeal” with the physical eating and drinking the very Body and Blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine; and with the “communion of saints” in our common confession of faith in Christ.

- We can certainly pray without being physically present with each other, but we have the assurance of Jesus when he says, *“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them”* (Matthew 18:20).

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son ... the Son is the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word ...” (Hebrews 1:1–3).

- There is power in God’s Word whether spoken or read or broadcast or sent by way of the Internet, but there was/is something very “corporeal” or “fleshy” about how God has worked our salvation in Christ Jesus, the “Word made flesh” (John 1:14).
- Consider also the language that the Apostle Paul uses to describe the life of the Church when he describes it as the “Body of Christ” (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12) or as “the fullness of him (Christ) who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22).
- There is also something very “fleshy” about how God continues to work through His people to care for one another and serve our neighbor in Jesus’ name. James challenges our over-spiritualizing when he writes, *“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food (physical needs). If one of you says to him (on the phone or through a Zoom meeting), ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed.’ But does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”* (James 2:16).
- Christ-centered and Christ-empowered ministry is holistic! At some level, we have to be physically engaged (face to face) with people in order to be engaged in Jesus’ mission through His Church. The Christian Faith is not just “information;” it is a Spirit-worked “transformation” of every aspect of our being: Body, mind, spirit, relationships, work, worship, vocation, and world view ... everything!

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NIV).

- This seems clear enough!
- We simply need each other standing together for encouragement in living out individually and collectively the life to which God has called us in His grace through Jesus.
- We gain courage when we come together. It’s simply human! At the same time, the Holy Spirit is also at work among us and through us as we come together as God’s people.
- When we were baptized, we were reborn into a new family ... the Family of God ... the communion (fellowship) of the saints.
- We are both privileged and obligated to physically/emotionally/spiritually “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2).

Pastor Shipley shifted in his chair. His mind raced to examples in Scripture of the joy God’s people had as they gathered together for worship: The Tent of Meeting, the dedication of the Solomon-built temple, the rebuilt city walls of Nehemiah’s day, etc. He also reflected on the sadness and sorrow for those who, because of “uncleanness,” were physically put outside the assembly because it was a mark of judgement.

Pastor Shipley prayed. ***“Holy Father, I come in Jesus’ name. Thank you for this time of reflection and rest. Thank you that you poured out your perfect judgment for all sin on your sinless Son, Jesus, so that you might gather your people before you and receive our praise and worship in time and eternity. Please continue to watch over the people you have given me to shepherd. Protect them and gather them back from being scattered by this pandemic. Give me wisdom how to encourage them and care for them. Many are still fearful. Some have new habits that may need breaking. Help me to be discerning and love them well. Holy Spirit, draw your people back as the fleshy Body of Christ you desire as we engage in your mission of love, new life, and forgiveness in our community. Help us to serve one another and our neighbor well in your name. Cause your Kingdom to come more fully among us and through us. Amen.”*** ■

Amen.

Rev. Dr. Robert E. Kasper serves as Assistant to the President - Congregation Mission and Ministries / Ministry Support for the Michigan District, LCMS.

A Summer of *Service* to Others

Bethany's Food Bank Still Serving the Community

by Elisa Schulz

Bethany, Detroit's food bank has been operating for several years. It used to be quite the social event—clients would walk into the pantry, get in line, fill their bags with food, then linger and have coffee and a treat while visiting with others. Church members would be there to help bag the food and to pray with the clients.

When the pandemic hit, a lot of that had to change. The food pantry continued to serve people twice a month, but now social distancing was required. The food was moved to another part of the building that had more space. Tables were placed outside the doors with bags of food, already filled. Since no large groups were allowed, the church decided that making appointments was the best way to handle the distribution. People could then come one at a time, pick up their bags, and leave.

Rev. Harold Avers, one of the volunteers who help with the food bank, spends Wednesday mornings making phone calls trying to reach people who used to come and asking them to make an appointment. Most people don't answer the calls. He says that, for whatever reason, the number of people who come for food has

dropped dramatically during the pandemic. They now serve approximately 25-30 individuals (who usually represent families) twice a month. Before the pandemic, they would serve up to 100. However, the need for food is still prevalent, and Bethany is there to serve them.

And then there is the story of a gentleman from Eastpointe who called requesting food delivery. He called three times, desperate to feed his family. Although Bethany does not deliver food, when he called the third time, Avers was reminded of the Bible passage from Luke 11—the friend who persists in asking for bread until finally he is helped—and they agreed to drive the food to the man’s house. Avers asked the man how he had found Bethany’s food bank, and he replied he had been calling every food bank he could find in the area, and Bethany was his only response.

Although challenges abound, Bethany, Detroit continues to find new and varied ways to serve the needs of its community, evangelizing, discipling, and spreading the



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

Good News of Jesus Christ in the city of Detroit.

Bethany is connected to Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E), a strategic and holistic urban outreach initiative of the Michigan District, LCMS based on the work of Jesus and His disciples in the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. A2E is supported, in part, through the Innovative Missional Ministry initiative of the District’s *Here We Stand* Campaign. To learn more about this ministry and others like it, visit michigandistrict.org/volunteer.

Peace Saginaw Helps Revitalize City Neighborhood

by Misty Gower

Nearly three dozen volunteers from Peace Saginaw joined the One Week One Street neighborhood revitalization mission on June 21–25 in the city of Saginaw. Peace was one of 21 churches and 39 overall organizations from throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region to participate in the annual mission in inner-city neighborhoods.

One Week, One Street is an annual urban revitalization

effort to encourage, hope, pride, and love for one’s neighbor by utilizing volunteers and donations from the Great Lakes Bay Region churches, businesses, and other non-profit organizations. Its main goals are to:

- Demonstrate God’s love and grace
- Inspire hope for a better future
- Increase community pride
- Reduce crime and violence
- Increase positive youth activity
- Increase home ownership
- Stabilize home values

Over the past three years, One Week One Street has successfully collaborated with over 30 churches, many businesses, community organizations, and non-profits.

In this year’s effort, 25 homes received improvements in the Elmwood/Beechwood Avenue neighborhood of Saginaw. The Peace team, made up of more than 30 staff and congregation volunteers of all ages, completed improvements at two homes that included yard-work and landscaping, brush clearing, painting of the houses and garages, siding repairs, downspout installations, fence installations, and more.



Photo courtesy of Peace Saginaw, Misty Gower

Ministries Working Together

by Jeff Heisner

“You see the little hand and you see the little face,” Tianna shared with a smile from ear to ear. The young lady was overflowing with excitement, as she saw her baby and described- the pictures from her ultrasound earlier in the day.

Tianna lives on the Southwest side of Detroit only a few blocks from Family of God. Before Covid, Tianna would regularly make the trip to the ministry to get food—both physical and spiritual. Family of God serves meals Sunday through Friday nights and also holds Bible studies. Both can be much needed for anyone growing up on Detroit’s Southwest side. Along with the dinners, Tianna talks with and seeks out guidance from Family of God pastors Jim Hill and Tyler Cronkright.

“Walking with Tianna is simply a joy” said Rev. Cronkright. *“She is one of the kindest women that I have met in my time at Family of God.”*

“They’re definitely very supportive as family, friends, a mother figure in every way,” Tianna said. *“It makes me feel blessed.”*

When Tianna first became pregnant she tried going to a local doctor in Detroit for pre-natal care. She quickly grew frustrated with the system when insurance issues made it impossible to get the care she needed. Tianna knew about The Luke Clinic, which works out of Family of God a couple days a month. Tianna even organized clothing donations and helped with the baby showers for the mothers-to-be. She also knew they provided medical care for mothers, but she didn’t know all they do until she had to rely on them.

The Luke Clinic provides accessible, high quality medical care for expectant mothers and infants under 12 months of age. Tianna gave up on the doctors she tried to visit before and is now relying on The Luke Clinic. She said the care she now receives is amazing. She sees the doctors, gets pre-natal vitamins, and vitals checked for both herself and her baby. There is more than just a sense of relief knowing The Luke Clinic is looking out for her.

“There are no words to express the joy I feel, the love I feel from here,” Tianna said.

Having two of Michigan District’s innovative missional ministries working together and filling the gaps is exactly what Tianna needed. It is also what Michigan District’s Assistant to the President Rev. Dr. Rob Kasper said was intended when The Luke Clinic joined up with Family of God. *“As Christians, we are called by God to be His instruments of grace in the lives of all people in our communities,”* Kasper said. *“Every context of ministry provides distinct opportunities to serve people in the name of Jesus. No one group of God’s people has all the skills and capacity to meet the variety of needs in a given context of ministry. That’s*



Photos by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS

Tianna receives a hug from one of The Luke Clinic volunteers (above) and looks at ultrasound pictures of her child (left).

why it is so important that faithful, mission-driven believers work together as they join forces to meet the needs of the community as ambassadors of God’s love in Jesus. When our works match our witness to the Gospel, the Holy Spirit transforms lives!”

Rev. Cronkright gets to see that transformation and says, *“To partner with [The Luke Clinic] is a glimpse of how the Kingdom of God operates, that is all of us working together, and it is quite special to be a part of it.”*

Flood Buckets to the Rescue

by Travis Grulke

A disaster may happen anywhere at any time ... and this summer it did! Because the Michigan District Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT) and congregations and school assembled 350 flood buckets last fall, when the summer rains came and floods raged in the Metro Detroit area, LERT volunteers from Trinity, Clinton Township were able to transport the buckets to a centralized storage facility in Southgate. From there, the buckets were distributed by several disaster relief organizations to assist with the flood relief efforts once the waters began to recede. These materials were used to muck-out basements, as there was a lot of work to help families in cleaning up homes and other buildings.

The supply of flood buckets is now depleted. Please

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Let Your *Light* Shine

by Alex Hoffmeyer



“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1–3).

There’s an old children’s song you probably know called “This Little Light of Mine.” It was written by Harry Dixon Loes after he heard a sermon about Christ’s atonement for sin at Moody Church. Inspired by Christ’s work for sinners, Loes set out to write a song of joy that would inspire others to live confidently in what Jesus has done for them. And this theme is easy to see in the lyrics. The singer repeats about letting the light of Christ shine, all around the neighborhood, and about how they will not hide the light under a bushel (Oh no!) or let it be snuffed out by Satan. The last verse has children even acting out what the enemy strives to do: “Don’t let Satan [blow] it out/I’m gonna let it shine!”

We’ve sung this song with our preschool children, and every time they sing proudly, their index fingers stretched out like a candle symbolizing the light of the Gospel in Jesus Christ. It’s a wonder as a pastor to witness young children singing about sharing Jesus with others, and to hear them do so as loudly and boldly as possible. But, as I wonder at the wonder, perhaps this is so because it is hard to possess such boldness as an adult dealing with the tensions of living in a world in which sin’s grip seems to grow tighter and tighter. Perhaps the thought of letting the Gospel light of Jesus shine so bright that the whole neighborhood can see is a frightening thought, for if we make ourselves a beacon like that, we will likely attract praise and scorn in equal measure.

I believe the current obstacle is a growing feeling of helplessness. As Christians watch individuals, communities, and even our governments accept and even promote immoral agendas to the praise of the populace, the question on most Christians’ minds is, “What can I do?” Can I really effect change? Can I make an impact to stem the tide of sin and immorality I see growing around me? Engaging with a culture that continues to stray further from God’s Word leaves us wondering what our work should really look like.

Perhaps the best place to begin is to come to grips with what our expectations should be. Though we desire it, we should not expect that our culture will ever look like the kingdom of God. As James Hunter writes in *To Change the Word*, “the establishment of [God’s] kingdom in eternity is an act of divine sovereignty alone and it will only be set in place at the final consummation at the end of time” (233). If we focus too much on “culture-making,” we will find ourselves led into triumphalism or despair, depending on the success or failure we find in shaping public policy. This is not to say that we should not make

such efforts, just that we should be realistic about what to expect from such efforts. After all, these works in themselves do not lead the sinner to salvation.

So, what should our work be? To put it simply: to let the Light shine! Arise, shine, for your light has come! Isaiah said it long ago: darkness has covered and will continue to cover the earth, and thick darkness will enshroud the people. But the Lord has arisen upon you, His people, and His glory will be seen upon you. God makes His people into beacons, bearers of His glory to the world. Our primary work is not to affect change or stem the tide of sin around us; rather, our primary work is to establish the rule of God in our hearts, minds, and souls, and allow this rule to affect our daily lives. For when we do this, God is present and He is glorified.

“So, what should our work be? To put it simply: to let the Light shine! Arise, shine, for your light has come!”

It is easy to become overwhelmed trying to effect change in the world around us, perhaps because our task is beyond our power. But God has given us something of tremendous power—His Word, His Glory, the Light of His Gospel. Our engagement with the world should proclaim the peace that God gives through these wondrous gifts, as well as the peace which is to come. These things provide the antithesis to our modern world, a subversion of those parts of life which are at odds with that proclamation of peace. They resist the ways of our world. And if we seek to live this out in our own lives, as well as encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ in doing the same, then perhaps we will reclaim the boldness we once had as children. Dear friends in Christ, you possess the light which scatters the darkness of sin in this world. Let it shine in all you say and do! ■

Rev. Alex Hoffmeyer graduated with an M.Div. from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. in May 2017, and has been blessed to serve Salem Lutheran Church in Coloma, Mich. He and his wife continue to enjoy Pure Michigan whenever they can, taking chances to explore God’s Creation on the trails, the bluffs, and the beaches.

SEPTEMBER 2021

At Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, New Sacred Spaces Take Shape, with CEF's Help



Redeemer's new building, now in mid-construction, will display the same Colonial style that church members have come to love, yet with larger more accessible spaces.



*“With our new building,
we’re striving, not
just to meet the needs
of current church
members, but also to
make room for new
families, now and for
next generations.”*

Reverend Randall Schlak
Senior Pastor
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
Birmingham, Michigan

By now, Reverend Randall Schlak, Senior Pastor at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, surely more than qualifies to reflect philosophically on the special nature of a church building. When he contemplates the classic Colonial-style structure that had well served his congregation for nearly 70 years — and looks ahead to the new, bigger church facility soon to replace it — Pastor Schlak can plainly state:

“Nothing in our building is more important than our sanctuary.”

He elaborates: “Whether it’s for worship, learning or fellowship, or for celebration of major life events, it all happens in the sanctuary. It’s

the center of our church life. And never more so than in difficult times, when our gatherings in faith are so important.”

Summing up the sanctuary’s centrality to Redeemer, Pastor Schlak could hardly put it more eloquently: “This, for our church members, is where Heaven touches Earth.”

Modern Demands More

In recent years, church leaders and members had increasingly recognized the need to rebuild Redeemer. Even after decades of periodic upgrades, the historic structure was proving inadequate to the congregation of today, especially in the sanctuary:

- Seating capacity was too small for larger services. For example, Redeemer's Easter services spilled over into the church's gymnasium.
- Aisles were too narrow to easily accommodate wheelchairs.
- The church's organ was failing and unreliable.

Elsewhere at Redeemer, the small, dark music room could hinder the music ministry. Children's classrooms were old and tired, and not up to parents' modern expectations. The foundation leaked in the rain, and there were no sprinklers to protect from fire.

Per Pastor Schlak, "Our beloved old building had simply outlived its usefulness."

Accessible and Adaptable

To help fund its needed rebuilding, Redeemer launched "Sacred Space", a capital stewardship campaign relying largely upon church members' generosity. Additional resources came through an affordable building loan from Church Extension Fund.

Sacred Space Phase 1, completed nine years ago, gave Redeemer its "Town Square" — an expansive, light-filled narthex that came to serve as church members' prime gathering place before and after services. "Once we had this wonderful space," says Pastor Schlak, "I could hardly imagine our church without it. Such a blessing for us all."



Pictured above are the beginning stages of construction for the new sanctuary. Changes will include wider aisles and pews, a bigger balcony, and flexible seating which will increase capacity for up to 600 worshippers when needed.

Phase 2, on schedule to complete in 2022, is now seeing the complete reconstruction of Redeemer's building and grounds. The new facility will display the same colonial aesthetic as before, yet with larger, more accessible, and adaptable spaces:

- Aisles and pews will be wider, the balcony will be bigger, and flexible seating will increase capacity for up to 600 worshippers when needed.
- Redeemer's expanded Town Square will have a direct entrance into the sanctuary.
- A new pipe organ will fill Redeemer's new sanctuary with glorious music of praise.
- Downstairs will add a second music room, more classrooms for youth programs, another large meeting space, and an all-new bridal lounge.

"With Sacred Space," says Pastor Schlak, "our foremost goals are to remove the limitations our historical building was placing on our ministries, and to ensure our new facilities will enable more welcoming and engaging experiences in faith." He adds: "We're so thankful for CEF's creativity and competitiveness in helping us fund this."

New, Now and Next

As Pastor Schlak tells it, "With our new building, we're striving, not just to meet the needs of current church members, but also to make room for new families, now and for next generations. We'll have what we need to reach deeper into our community and provide worship experiences that will allow Jesus to touch and change more lives."



Church Extension Fund

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Here We Stand

A Caring Community in Pontiac

St. Paul Community, Pontiac, located in an impoverished area about 20 miles northwest of Detroit, seeks to serve its neighbors by providing for their needs. The church's Facebook page profile reads, *"Located in the heart of a struggling Pontiac, MI. Our focus is to bring more people to believe that Jesus is their Lord and Savior!"*

According to St. Paul Community's pastor, Rev. Chris Jung, every day there is someone in need, whether be it for food, clothing, or even for a phone (the church helps them get a government-issued phone). They have a clothing closet and a food pantry that are open twice a week, and on Wednesdays they hold a Bible study and serve a hot meal. Jung says the meal has been drive-thru only this year, and they can serve anywhere from 2-70 meals a week. On Fridays they hold "Friday Foods"—a giveaway of food collected from grocery stores and restaurants by a mission through Trinity, Utica.

St. Paul Community's Parish Nurse also serves by holding vaccination clinics, blood pressure checks, health care classes, and first-aid classes. They held a flu vaccination clinic last October and had a turnout of about 38 people—many more than they expected.

Caring for the children in the community is also a priority for the church, which held a Vacation Bible School at the end of July. The VBS had two components: one for



St. Paul Community's Parish Nurse Mary (l) talking with members.

Photos by Jeff Haisner/Michigan District, LCMS

the grade school children and another for the preteens and teenagers. The teens did different cultural activities and service projects throughout Metro Detroit.

St. Paul Community is also currently in the process of planning an improvement program that will include an outdoor pavilion, new children's playground, and a half-court basketball court. Pastor Jung says, *"It will take a while to get all of that done, but we are ticking along."*

The ministry at St. Paul Community, Pontiac is part of the A2E initiative supported by the Michigan District's Here We Stand Campaign. For more information, visit herewestand.michigandistrict.org.

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

(through July 28, 2021)

\$8,874,551.82	Total campaign gifts, pledges, and goals
\$8,525,543.09	Cash received which includes \$700,000 CEF Matching Funds
\$292,328.51	Outstanding commitments (pledges)
1,607	Total Contributors
1,433	Individual Contributors
174	Congregations Contributing
48.9%	% of Michigan District Congregations currently participating
\$1,557,691.98	Total given/pledged for Professional Church Worker Scholarships
\$3,875,392.17	Total given/pledged for Innovative Missional Ministry
\$1,218,245.98	Total given/pledged for Michigan District Endowment
\$2,166,521.46	Total given/pledged for International Ministries

Bible verse: **Psalm 71:17–18**

"O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come."

herewestand.michigandistrict.org



Here We Stand

75TH LLL MEN'S RETREAT AT CAMP ARCADIA SEPTEMBER 9–12, 2021 REMEMBER, REJOICE, RENEW

LUKE 23:42

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16



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Your Investment Builds Churches

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

*"We appreciate CEF
and their generosity.
Without their grant
programs, projects
may have stayed on the
back burner rather than
becoming a reality.
They are a blessing for
our district."*

— Pastor Riddle,
Peace, Rogers City



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School Cereal Challenge Benefits Food Bank and Hospital

During the 2020-2021 school year, students faced many different challenges. With many changes of calendar events and activities being held in the classroom, Our Shepherd, Birmingham challenged the students with various mission projects.

In May of 2021, the students were challenged to bring in 2,000 boxes of cereal to be donated to Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan in conjunction with Children's Hospital of Michigan.

Each day, children carried in bags of cereal. Although the pile grew slowly at first, the excitement of the children grew rapidly. The students watched the collection thermometer rise, adding to the enthusiasm to bring in more individual boxes and then cases of cereal.

Not only did the students and their families donate cereal, but church members and community members joined in the challenge. In just over two weeks, the goal of 2,000 boxes of cereal was reached. Yet, the children were not done! They continued to bring in more and more cereal and the excitement grew as they watched the donation thermometer fill.

The final total of collected cereal boxes was 2,442. Praise God!



Photo courtesy of Our Shepherd, Birmingham

CLW Mission Focus

The Council of Lutheran Women (CLW) is hosting its first Mission Focus event at Faith, Troy on Monday, September 27, from 9 a.m.–1 p.m. The event will include exhibits and presentations throughout the morning. Come and learn about CLW's mission partners. Light refreshments will be served during the morning and lunch is provided. The event is free, but please make your reservation online at <https://bit.ly/3kU1gWJ>. At 1 p.m., the CLW's Fall Meeting will begin in person and via Zoom. All are welcome to attend!

14 September 2021



© FingerGey/Unsplash

Downriver Circuit Congregations Help Expand Radio Broadcast

On August 1, 2021, *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer* became international thanks to the efforts and support of the Detroit Downriver Circuit of Michigan District, LCMS congregations. The radio/podcast of the *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer* program will reach the Caribbean, South America, and parts of Africa via short wave on WWRB ("World Wide Religious Broadcasting"). The signal will be 5.050 megahertz Sundays at 7 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Savings Time).

Martin Luther's Evening Prayer is currently broadcast over nine stations, both AM and FM: Detroit, Mich.; Scranton, Pa.; Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; Richmond, Va.; Council Bluffs, Iowa; Omaha, Neb.; and Bakersfield, Calif. The short wave broadcast out of Morrison, Tenn., will be the tenth station, and the podcast of the program is available at Buzzsprout.com/34718 at any time, including many messages from the past ten years of the broadcast's history. Proclaiming "an unchanging faith for changing lives," the focus of *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer* is analyzing human experience and its meaning in light of God's Word.

Community Outreach to Women

St. Paul, Ann Arbor is hosting a community outreach to women through its Women's Health Day on Saturday, September 11, 2021, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Enjoy various fitness classes, smoothie bar, massage, prayer and Visual Faith booths, and more! Register at nicolecolley818.wixsite.com/womenshealthday. Proceeds will benefit the Alzheimer's Association and the St. Paul Scholarship Fund.

CONVENTION NEWS

PEOPLE OF HOPE ... IT'S TIME! 2022 Michigan District Convention June 26–28, 2022

The 103rd Regular Convention of the Michigan District, LCMS will be held June 26–28, 2022 at Concordia University Ann Arbor.

The theme for the convention is “People of Hope ... It’s Time!” (1 Peter 1:3–5; Romans 10:12–15; 2 Corinthians 6:1–2). President Maier shares, “Because of Jesus paying the price for the sins of the world on Calvary’s cross and proclaiming victory over death by His rising from the dead ... *‘WHOEVER believes in Him will not be disappointed’* and *‘WHOEVER will call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.’* These Gospel assurances fill us with hope in this darkening world of division, racial unrest, and hopelessness. As people of hope, ‘the light of the world’, indeed, ‘stars shining in the universe,’ we are *‘working together with Him,’* knowing that *‘NOW is the favorable time,’ NOW is the day of salvation,’* NOW is the time to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. People of Hope ... It’s Time!”

Two separate Call for Nominations mailings went out in September of 2020 to all congregations and an updated mailing was sent in August of 2021. The first mailing contained official ballot forms for submitting President and Vice President nominations which are to be mailed to Rev. Darryl L. Andrzejewski; 20014 Holiday Rd; Grosse Pointe Woods MI 48236-2372. The second mailing contained official ballot forms for submitting Secretary, Board of Directors, Church Extension Fund Board of Directors, and District Nominating Committee nominations which are to be mailed to Rev. Robert Appold; 8653 Lilly Ridge Dr SE; Alto MI 49302-9000. If you have already nominated candidates for the positions included above, **YOUR NOMINATIONS ARE STILL VALID.**



If you have not nominated candidates, please do. If extra copies are needed, contact Laurie Brown at 888.225.2111 ext. 233 or download at michigandistrict.org/convention. The deadline to submit nominations is February 26, 2022.

Thirty-one of the 44 circuits have already elected Circuit Visitors in 2021. **These elections are still valid,** and will continue in full effect through 2025. If your circuit has not held a Circuit Forum to elect a Circuit Visitor, or to conduct other official business, this must be scheduled before January 31, 2022. Please check with your Circuit Visitor if you have questions regarding the circuit forum or circuit visitor nominations.

Overtures may be submitted only by a member congregation, the Board of Directors, an official district conference of ordained/commissioned ministers, or a circuit forum. Overtures must be submitted using the overture template which can be downloaded from the Michigan District website. The deadline to submit overtures is February 26, 2022. No overture received subsequent to that date shall be accepted for convention consideration unless a committee consisting of the District President, the First Vice President, and the District Secretary adjudge it to be a matter of overriding importance and urgency which is not adequately covered by documents already before the convention.



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS.

LWML 39th Biennial Convention Highlights

by Ruth Thomas, 2021 Host Committee Chairman

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) welcomed nearly 3,000 people, including 586 first-time participants, to the LWML Convention in Lexington, Kentucky, June 24–27, 2021, under the theme “Running the Race ... Looking to Jesus.” The convention theme was based on Hebrews 12:1–2. The LWML voting body adopted a \$2,150,000 mission goal for the 2021–2023 biennium. This goal, by the grace of God, will fund 28 mission grants as women and men respond in prayer, offerings, and Mite Box donations during the next two years.

Attendees worshiped together and intently listened to Mites in Action speakers sharing how, as past mission grant recipients, God is working in their organizations.

Heart to Heart Sisters, Young Women Representatives, and many other volunteers carried signs or flags from 82 countries in the Saturday morning Mission Flag Procession. Children and teens from the King's Kids Clubhouse paraded through the arena.

Four offerings were collected with the first offering given to the upcoming biennium's LWML Mission Goal. The other three offerings were designated to opportunities to share God's love and mercy in the districts hosting the convention.

A mission pledge walk was held to support the new \$2,150,000 mission goal for the 2021–2023 biennium. Groups and individuals unable to attend the convention were encouraged to walk in their neighborhoods. In Lexington, nearly 1,100 individuals took part, walking



Photo courtesy of Pat Maier

Michigan District, LCMS President Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier preaching at the opening worship service.

from the convention center to Thoroughbred Park in a 1.5 mile loop. Contributions raised totaled \$96,232.92.

The Sixth Biennial Tee Up 4 Mites Golf Outing was held on Wednesday, June 23, at the beautiful University Club of Kentucky. There were 69 golfers, comprising 18 teams sponsored by the Lutheran Federal Credit Union. The funds raised totaled \$30,710.00 in gross receipts.

The 2021 LWML Convention was hosted by the Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio LWML Districts. The Host Committee serves the needs of convention attendees by providing adequate facilities and personnel for the business and programming of the convention. It takes many volunteers from the host districts to make this all possible.



Photos courtesy of LWML

Special Recognition

Foster Installed in Macomb

Rev. Dr. Charles Y. Foster (pictured front row center) was installed on July 11, 2021, as senior pastor at Immanuel, Macomb. He studied at Oglethorpe University (B.S. 1996) and Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Mo. (M.Div. 2001). He received his D.Min. from Trinity Theological Seminary.

Dr. Foster's vicarage was at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Paducah, Ky. He was ordained into the ministry and installed at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Murray, Ky (2001–2016). He then served as associate pastor to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ind. until he accepted the call to Immanuel.

Dr. Foster and his wife, Tricia, have three children: Julia-Wynne, Chalmers, and Keziah.



Photo courtesy of Tricia Foster

Schultz Installed

In June, Rev. Roderick Schultz (pictured front row, third from left) was installed as senior pastor at St. Luke, Clinton Township.

Pastor Schultz is a graduate of St. Matthew Lutheran High School where he met his wife, Sheryl. For years, he worked with his father in a steel fabrication business on the family farm while he coached his children's soccer and basketball teams. In the spring of 2001, after much prayer, he returned to school to complete his bachelor's degree before entering Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Pastor Schultz was ordained and installed at Our Redeemer, Dearborn (2008–2019) and was the vacancy pastor at St. Matthew, Westland (2019–20) before accepting the call to St. Luke.



Photo courtesy of St. Luke, Clinton Twp.

Kempin Celebrates 25 Years In Ministry

This summer, St. John's, Midland recognized Rev. Daniel Kempin for his 25 years in the ministry. A celebration of his ministry was held between services with many of his family from Wisconsin and Illinois in attendance.

A graduate of Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Mo., he earned a M.Div. and a STM. He was also granted a "Preaching Excellence Award" for his ability to explain the Gospel message in simple but meaningful language. His vicarage took him to Wyoming, where he met his bride, Karen Chance, who was serving as a Director of Christian Education. Pastor Kempin served Grace, Monroe (1996–2005) and Grace, Brooklyn Park, Minn. (2005–2009) before accepting the call to St. John's, Midland.

Pastor Kempin and his wife, Karen, have four children: Sarah, Jonathan, Hannah, and the late Katherine Grace.



Photo courtesy of St. John's, Midland

A Summer of Service to Others continued from page 7

consider putting together flood buckets in the next couple of months to help restock for future disasters.

Below is information on what is needed for the buckets. Please make sure you follow the exact description for each item. Thrivent® Action Teams are a great way to purchase the needed supplies. If your congregation or school assembles buckets, please contact Travis Grulke at travis.grulke@michigandistrict.org or 734.665.3791 to let him know. If you cannot deliver them to one of the storage locations in Grand Rapids or Marine City, let Travis know and LERT volunteers will coordinate pick-up.

Flood Buckets/Cleaning Supplies

- 5-gallon bucket with lid
- 2 large trash bags (40-gallon Contractor Grade)
- Comet or scouring cleanser
- Pine Sol – 48 oz
- Clorox bleach – 1 gallon
- Scrub brush
- Sponges & rags
- Dust Mask - N-95 required (if possible)
- Household kitchen-style rubber gloves
- Clothesline
- Clothes pins

If you would like to know more about Michigan District's Disaster Ministry or how to become part of its LERT team, visit michigandistrict.org/disasterresponse.



Mobile Food Pantry Serving Southwest Michigan

by Jeff Heisner

A huge semi-truck pulls into the parking lot at the Trinity Lutheran Mission Center in St. Joseph, Mich. The driver lifts the door of the trailer, which is filled with boxes of food. A lot of boxes. There's no way all that food is for this one stop, but the driver keeps unloading box after box, until the semi's trailer is empty. That's 3.5 tons of food that Trinity will be handing out to families in need.

Trinity's Mobile Food Pantry helps feed the community once a month. The food comes from Feeding America. Deacon Scott Kizer leads the program at Trinity and this mission is near to his heart. Kizer was born in Benton Harbor, which is right next to St. Joseph. Benton Harbor has seen its share of difficult times. On a normal work day there's not much going on. Many buildings are in decay. Windows are boarded up and streets are empty with few, if any, people walking around the downtown.

"Employment is not there," said Kizer. "It's a community that, since the 70s, I don't want to say deteriorated, but things haven't gone well for them."

Many people being served by Trinity on this day are from Benton Harbor. The relationship part of this ministry is not the same since the Covid-19 pandemic started. Kizer is working to regain that part of the mission. Trinity and their circuit of churches had their mission headquarters in Benton Harbor not long ago, but when Covid hit they decided it wasn't feasible to continue to pay for space for the operations. They plan on finding a new home in Benton Harbor. *"With this*



Covid ordeal,” Kizer said, “I think we can focus on what was working well and what wasn’t working well.”

What is working well is the Mobile Food Pantry. Kizer and about 20 volunteers sort, organize, and then pack boxes for each family. The families get a big box of staples like meat, vegetables, bread, milk, and even a treat or two. A line of cars forms down the street and around the block and Kizer greets each car before they get their box. The volunteers bless each individual who comes to get food.

On this day, more than 80 families were served—it was another successful day for the ministry in Southwest Michigan. They have had as many as 125 people drive through the Mobile Food Pantry on one day this summer. The participants in the program are extremely appreciative for the ministry. One elderly woman brought her mother with her to Trinity and they each received a box of food. She said gratefully, *“I don’t get food stamps, so this is a blessing.”*



Photo by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS

The Benton Harbor Outreach is an Innovative Missional Ministry of supported by the Michigan District, LCMS. For more information on the Michigan District’s *Here We Stand* campaign or Innovative Missional Ministries, visit herewestand.michigandistrict.org. To volunteer, go to michigandistrict.org/volunteer. ■



Listening Forums

The Michigan District Board of Directors will be hosting four listening forums this fall. They would like to hear from attendees regarding (1) what you believe are the biggest challenges of our district right now; (2) what problems your congregation is facing right now; (3) what you think we need in the next district president; among other things. We invite all church workers, convention delegates, lay leaders, and laity to join us at one of these four events in preparation for the 2022 Michigan District Convention.

Peace, Saginaw

Saturday, September 18
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Lunch will be provided

St. Michael, Portage

Saturday, October 2
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Lunch will be provided

Guardian, Dearborn

Tuesday, October 5
7–9 p.m.
Snacks will be provided

Live Zoom Event

Wednesday, October 6
7–9 p.m.

To register to attend please visit:

michigandistrict.org/listeningforums



Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Michael Belinsky (Beulah, MI) to St. John, Beemer, NE
Rev. Gary Bender (Saginaw) to IIM, Faith, Bay City
Rev. David Goehmann (Norfolk, NE) to St. John's, Ludington
Mr. Timothy LeClair (Rogers City, MI) to SMP Family of God, Detroit
Rev. Robert Riggs (Carson City) to IIM, Holy Cross, Flushing
Rev. Michael Ruhl (Pinckney, MI) to Trinity, Pinckney
Rev. Christopher Vossler (McFarland, KS) to St. Paul, Sanford

Status and Title Change

Rev. Clifford Bira (Flushing, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. Daniel Dockery (Traverse City) to Emeritus
Rev. L. Daniel Johnson (Hillsdale, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. Barry Mueller (Richmond, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. David Rossow (Swartz Creek, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. Sean Willman (Hillsdale) to Sole, St. Paul, Hillsdale

Transferred Into District

Rev. Dr. Charles (Chad) Foster (Columbus, IN) from Indiana District
Rev. Adam Kosberg (Charleston, SC) from Southeastern District
Rev. Christopher Vossler (McFarland, KS) from Kansas District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. David Weiss (Muskego, WI) to South Wisconsin District

Called Home

Rev. Gary Headapohl
Rev. David Kaarre

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Auxter, Annalyse (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to St. Paul, Northville
Bidingier, Tessa (Concordia, Mequon) to St. Paul, Albion
Brown, Alicia (St. Matthew, Walled Lake) to Our Savior, Hartland
Cruz, Melissa (Candidate) to Trinity, Bay City
Gorka, Katherine (Open Arms, Belleville) to Trinity, Casa Grande, AZ
Gruber, Mary (Emeritus) to Holy Ghost, Monroe
Kamin, Jonathan (Zion, Bay City) to St. John, Champaign, IL
Phillips, Anne (Candidate) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (North)
Rahn, Kalera (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to West Michigan Lutheran High School, Wyoming
Smith, Rebecca (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Bethlehem, Saginaw
Weishaar, Sarah (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Bethlehem, Lakewood, CO
Weiss, Jeffery (Candidate) to Trinity, Saint Joseph
Wert, Emilyann (Concordia, Fort Wayne, IN) to Our Savior, Grand Rapids

Change of Status

Bunke, James (Immanuel, Sebewaing) to Emeritus
Eckstorm, Kay (St. John, Bay City) to Emeritus
Frusti, Kathleen (Trinity, Jackson) to Emeritus
Greve, Wendy (Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Ann Arbor) to Emeritus
Gulliver, Holly (Peace, Saginaw) to Emeritus
Havers, Brenda (Trinity, Utica) to Emeritus
Jacques, Krista (Immanuel, Macomb) to Emeritus
Rochlitz, David (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Emeritus
Sankey, Brent (Trinity, Sturgis) to Candidate
Schwecke, Steven (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Emeritus
Stresman, Kevin (St. Michael's, Richville) to Emeritus
Weismantel, Paul (St. Peter, Saint Johns) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Baglow, Ryan (Indiana District) to LHSA, Rochester Hills
Eberhard, Charlotte (Indiana District) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
Greve, Timothy (Rocky Mountain District) to LHSA, Rochester Hills
Schimm, Peter (Pacific Southwest District) to St. John, Bay City
Weston, Ashlea (Indiana District) to Trinity, Manistee

Transferred Out of District

Brown, Alicia (St. Matthew, Walled Lake) to English District
Kamin, Jonathan (Zion, Bay City) to Central Illinois District
Rosin, Aaron (Peace, Shelby Township) to Indiana District
Weishaar, Sarah (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Rocky Mountain District
Wilke, Christian (Valley Lutheran, Saginaw) to Texas District

Resigned From the Roster

Hardies, Michael

Removed From Roster

Carlson, Sandra
Eisman, Kathleen
Karsten, Beverly
Knuth, Fred
Lemke, George
Pfund, Jonathan

Called Home

Milz, G. David
Storck, Charles

Calendar of Events

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

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 1 Autumn Circuit Visitors Conference
Peace, Ann Arbor
- 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

- 1 New Teacher Orientation
District Office, Ann Arbor
- 1–2 Quest Autumn Gathering
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 10 State Cross Country Meet
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 10–12 All Pastors Conference
Shanty Creek Resort, Bellaire
- 19 Board of Directors Meeting
Camp Concordia, Gowen
- 28 New Church Worker Conference
Concordia University Ann Arbor