

December 2021

michigan

IN TOUCH

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

HEALTHY WORKERS

Home for the Holidays

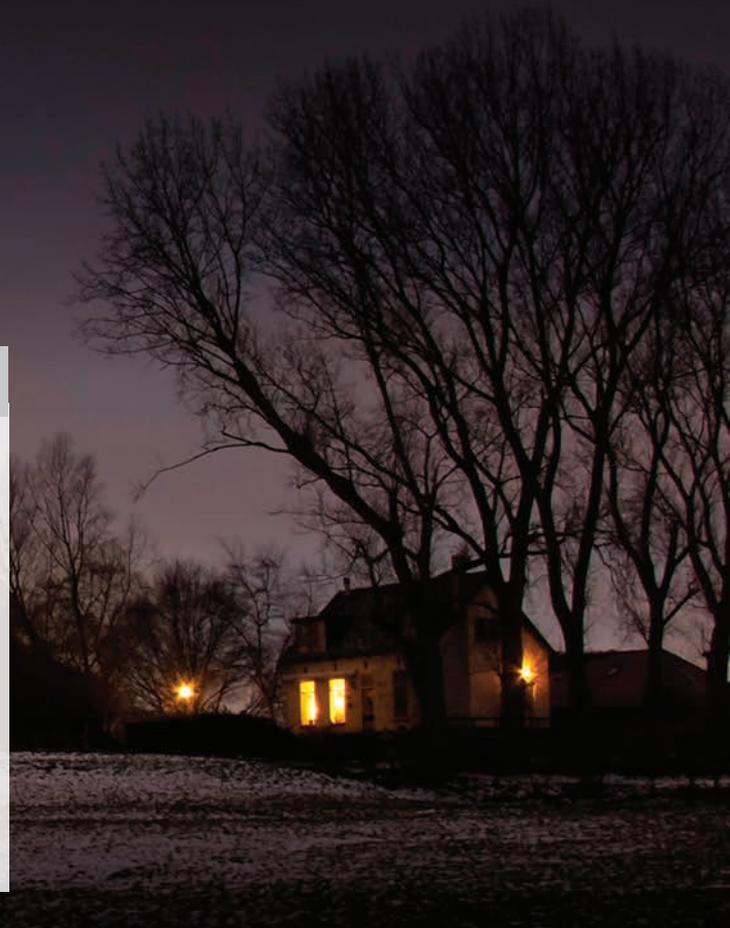
by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

“... everyone went to their own town ...” (Luke 2:3*)

Folgers Coffee ads still get to me, I admit. Different ads for a plethora of promising products can tug on the heartstrings when they have a college student or soldier returning home for the holidays. But I especially liked the 2009 Folgers Christmas TV ad in which the brother comes home from West Africa and his sister—who has been waiting all night by a snow-laced window—excitedly greets him. They, of course,

continued on page 2

© jaap-willem\Stock



michigan

IN TOUCH

Official Periodical of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
December 2021, Volume 20, No. 11
ISSN: 1538-8115 (print)
ISSN: 2331-8619 (online)

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

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

©2021 Michigan District, LCMS, Ann Arbor, Michigan. *Michigan In Touch* is published monthly by the Michigan District and inserted into *The Lutheran Witness* and distributed to subscribers 11 times a year. It is also available online at www.michiganintouch.com. Reproduction of articles is permissible with written permission of the Michigan District Communications Department and should give credit to *Michigan In Touch*. References to resources and websites for further information are included in *Michigan In Touch* for the potential use by individuals and congregations. Resources not associated with or published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or Concordia Publishing House® may contain helpful programmatic information but may vary in doctrine from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Please use discretion or consult your pastor on doctrinal issues. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the English Standard Version (ESV).



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

888.225.2111
intouch@michigandistrict.org
michigandistrict.org

Table of Contents

1	Healthy Workers
7	Great Compassion
8	Church Extension Fund
10	Great Commission
11	Christmas Appeal
13	LLL
16	Calls and Roster Update
16	Calendar of Events

“I would invite you to join me in considering when (and why) Jesus came “home” on that “holy-day,” that first Christmas.”

continued from page 1

retreat to the kitchen where the smell of freshly brewed coffee greets them ... and soon wakes their parents who join the “home-coming.”

Ahhhhh. Nothing quite like being home for the holidays.

Some of our Christmas memories are idealized ... but others, like when our family would drive (after my father was done preaching at the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Service) from Wisconsin to Western New York to “the farm” (a dairy farm where my mother was born) are quite real (and almost idolized). My brother and I would wake up early on Christmas Day, help with chores in the barn, and listen to Christmas hymns, and sermons, readings, and Concertos on public radio. All this in a barn/stable with all the sounds and smells and accompanying reflections of the Son of God being born in such a place. Carrying steamy milk to the “milk house” through the crunchy snow, seeing the warm light from the old farmhouse kitchen window where grandma’s breakfast would include eggs, bacon, fried onions, and homemade bread/toast, and imagining the fun and (more) food and laughter of family and friends later in the day ... “Could anything on earth be better?” I wondered.

God does give us very special times and these wonder-filled memories of the past are truly gifts of His grace. However, I want to acknowledge that not all people have such memories. Indeed, when there’s been a loss of someone near and dear or something significant in our life, the holidays can be a most difficult time to face or traverse. In fact, you might want to do nothing more than just stay at “home for the holidays.” You have a very different view of the Advent and Christmas season with very diverse, perhaps, painful memories.

With both possibilities—or anything in between—in mind, I would invite you to join me in considering when (and why) **Jesus came “home”** on that “holy-day,” that first Christmas.

First, Jesus came to make His home ... in our world. Sent by God, being fully God, Jesus took upon Himself our human flesh and blood, body and spirit to relate to us, to communicate with us, to take care of us and our greatest need—the forgiveness of our sins which alone brings true life—becoming *Immanuel*, “*God with us.*”

John’s Gospel, in chapter 1, puts it like this: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (John 1:1–5). Or the great Apostle Paul, in his most joyous of letters, writes of Jesus: “*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness*” (Philippians 2:6–7).

The Gospel would also tell us that “**our world**” is most definitely also “**your**” world. Your world with you in it, you and all your weaknesses, frailties, and propensities to worry or be envious, or ... A long list of sins could be filled in and probably not all that much different for each of us, except for their order of significance and dominance. But Jesus would say to you, “Yes, I AM the world’s Savior and Redeemer. But I

“God’s love for the world in Christ—
His love for you—is truly Good News!”

love you with an everlasting love and want to be *your* Savior and Redeemer! Yes, I know and love everyone you know. I want to be their Savior and Redeemer and Lord as well!”

What the disciples came to know and believe, and through the same inspiring Holy Spirit write about, is who, by grace, we have come to know, believe, and confess: “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

God’s love for the world in Christ—His love for you—is truly Good News! I am reminded of the Apostle Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14–19, where he remembers that every family in heaven and on earth is named and known by God: “*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (ESV).

Thank you, Jesus, for coming to this world that you made but that rebelled in sin and consequently brought death to everyone and everything.

Secondly, Jesus came to make His home ... in your heart. John also writes in his Gospel: “*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God*” (John 1:12).

Later, in chapter 3, verses 3 and 7, John will talk about the necessity of being “*born again.*” It is indeed God that gives this **new birth** by grace through faith. This **new life** is from God and is in intimate relationship with God. Paul especially makes this clear in his proclamation of what happens in Baptism in Romans 6:4 and the surrounding context. (Let me urge you to take the time to read Romans 6:1–14 and note all the personal pronouns and the tenses of the verbs).

God does come to live within us (Galatians 2:20). As only Luther could express it, in a hymn written for

Christmas he prays:

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

Then, with a recognition of what such a saving relationship does for the believing child of God, Luther expresses the redeemed desire and will to sing and praise and give witness to God.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue,
That sweetest ancient cradle song.

(These lyrics appear in the later stanzas of the Christmas Hymn *From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*, penned by Martin Luther in 1535.)

Considering the personal, intimate love of God for His children, and the similar relationship that God desires and creates with His children, I am reminded of a story that might help color and illustrate these truths.

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the public schools. (Oh, that we could do that in the United States today. Think about it. That was just 34 years ago.) They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments, and a large orphanage.

About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. They relate the following story in their own words:

It was nearing the holiday season, 1994, time for our orphans to hear for the first time the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger.

Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they



A Christmas Blessing: My Grandparents' Story, a *Gift*

by Hermina C. "Bobbie" Baker and Adrienne N. Jankens

My grandparents, Jim and Bobbie Baker, recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. It is an event that they had spoken about regularly for much longer than the year leading up to that April day. To reach seventy years of marriage is a feat of persistence in the face of the challenges of personal health, career decisions, and caregiving for the generations that come before and after.

My grandparents love telling stories. At each meal, we hear the old favorites (like the stories about my grandfather's time at Cass Tech, about the pets they had when they were a young family, about their trips abroad—there are so many). As a family life counselor who only just retired in the last couple of years, my grandmother knows that listening to people's stories can bring a kind of healing. Some people just need to tell their stories; some just want to listen to know that what they experience is something shared by many.

Recently, my grandmother shared this story with me, and asked me to share it with you.

A Christmas Blessing

It was Tuesday, December 1, 2020. It had snowed the night before. The ground was covered with a beautiful blanket of white, putting us in the Christmas mood. I had a doctor's appointment that day, and my husband, Jim, was a little anxious about driving because of the snow and getting to the doctor's office on time.

The driving was not bad, and we reached the doctor's office in plenty of time. We walked into the office; because of the pandemic, there were not a lot of chairs in the waiting room. We registered and looked for two chairs together. There were two on the front wall, two on the side wall, two on the back wall, and two in the middle of the room. Jim and I chose to sit in the two chairs in the middle. We began to chat with one another and with a young woman sitting across from us and her little boy with crutches. A man walked into the office. He was casually dressed, wearing Bermuda shorts on this cold, snowy day. He sat down in a chair behind us.

A few minutes later I heard a voice behind me. I turned around and smiled at the gentleman when he asked if Jim and I were married.

"Yes," I replied.

"I have never seen two married people talk to each other like you are."

I smiled. He asked how long we were married and looked at me in surprise when I replied, *"We will be married seventy years in April of '21."*

"My gosh! Where did you two meet?"

I explained that we grew up down the street from each other.

"It must have been destiny," he replied.

"I never thought of it that way, but you may be right." Just then, we were called back into the examination room.

We had our meeting with the doctor, and when we began to leave, I noticed the man I had spoken with was still seated in the waiting room. Jim went ahead of me to open the door, and as I walked past the man, I said, *"Have a blessed Christmas."*

He replied, *"You have already given me a gift."*

I walked through the door to leave, and I could not help wondering, where did the gift come from?

Really, this story represents a kind of typical day for my grandparents right now. They go to doctor's appointments, and they enjoy sharing with others they meet how much they love each other, how long this journey has been for them. The love they feel for each other has

always been apparent. And what is important to me about my grandma's story is that they were able to demonstrate something about that relationship to a stranger in a doctor's waiting room through a simple conversation. We can imagine that the man in the waiting room spent his

time there reflecting on the work it must take to sustain a marriage for seventy years. Perhaps his heart was moved to convey, through his actions, his love for someone with whom he has a familial relationship. Perhaps it gave him hope that he might find and work to sustain that kind of relationship with someone else. Maybe he reflected on how humility or forgiveness might strengthen a relationship that was hurting. And we can wonder what might have happened if that conversation had the time to develop: How did you make it work for so long? What got you through hard times? What is it that gives you each a deep sense of joy and purpose in working through each day together?

Of course, the message in my grandma's story is implicit. Just like she wonders at the end of the vignette, we don't get to know what "gift" the man experienced through that short interaction. But what we can take away from the retelling is a reminder that Christian marriage is a witness and a gift to others through what it demonstrates: that sustaining that relationship through humility, grace, forgiveness, and daily action is part of a couple's work to witness Christ's love to *each other*. ■

Hermine C. "Bobbie" Baker, LPC, LLP, NCC, ACS, was founder of the Trinity Lutheran Family Counseling Center and a pre-marital counselor for St. John, Rochester. In 2011, she published Grief Reflections: A Quiet Book of Comfort. She and her husband Jim are members at St. John, Rochester.

Adrienne Jankens, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Wayne State University and a former teacher at Valley Lutheran High School in Saginaw (2000-2006). She and her four children are members at St. John, Rochester.



Jim and Bobbie Baker



Why there are 12 days of Christmas

by Ryan P. Tinetti

Photo courtesy of Elisa Schulz Photography

When the celebration of Jesus' nativity ends we find ourselves smack in the middle of the 12 days of Christmas. Or are those 12 days passed already? Aren't they December 13th-25th?

Some time back I was standing in the elevator at the hospital, reading a poster on the wall: "Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas with great deals!" There were savings promised at the gift shop each of the first dozen days of December. According to the poster, December 1st-12th were the supposed 12 Days. Are they?

In fact, both of these interpretations of the 12 Days of Christmas miss the mark. The truth underscores the deep delight of this holiday.

The ghost of Christmas passed

The "12 Days of Christmas" refer to the 12 days from December 25th through January 6th. Christmas Day is the beginning of a festival that carries on for nearly two weeks, up until the feast of Epiphany. "Christmas" isn't just a day, in other words; it's a season.

Now, few in our society would dispute that there is such a thing as the "Christmas season," but they might define it quite differently. This season would extend from, say, Thanksgiving until perhaps December 26th, when the radio stations drop their Christmas tunes like a hot coal in the stocking and go back to their regularly scheduled programming.

But as the world gives up the ghost of Christmas passed,

the Church is just getting started with her yuletide celebrations. She has waited and watched throughout Advent—which tends to just be lumped in with what author Gregory Jones calls "HalloThanksMas." She has refrained from singing her Gloria in Excelsis ("Glory to God in the highest!") until she can sing it with the angels on Christmas Eve. Now, she's ready to party.

Which gets at the deeper reason why there are 12 Days of Christmas. It's a fact of the calendar, yes, but it's more than that.

Too much for one day

The real reason that Christmas is 12 days is that the feast is too glorious for just one day. As Elsa Chaney writes in her book, the suitably titled *Twelve Days of Christmas*, "So bright is the radiance of the Light which has come at Christmas, so awesome is the mystery we celebrate, that a single day's observance barely initiates us into the meaning of the feast."

There's a lot of joy to pack into this stocking.

And so I think it is high time that Christians reclaim the 12 Days. Too long have we allowed our celebrations to be co-opted by the culture's "Christmas season." Keeping the 12 Days is a path toward greater joy, greater festivity and, perhaps, even greater sanity.

So how will you keep this 12-day feast? ■

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



Photos by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

Loading up on Love

By Elisa Schulz

Cars, pick-up trucks, trailers, and moving vans pull up to the parking lot of Valley Lutheran High School (Saginaw, Mich.) in a steady stream. They park near one of two semis, and volunteers start unloading boxes containing quilts, baby care kits, personal care kits, fabric (sewing) kits, and school kits for Lutheran World Relief (LWR).

Patricia (Pat) Schuknecht, her husband Steve, her sister Liz, and her brother-in-law, Rev. Bob Mikkelson, coordinate the whole operation and are aided by VLHS students. They start at 9 a.m. and continue until 1 p.m. Pat is the Michigan District coordinator for the LWR annual ingathering that takes place the third week in October. LWR semis are stationed at three different locations (Valley Lutheran, Lutheran HS Westland, and West Lutheran HS in Grand Rapids). Other churches around the state organize local ingatherings and later send their full vans to meet up with the trucks, which in turn take the donations to the LWR warehouse in Baltimore. From there (as well as from the Minnesota warehouse), the kits and quilts are shipped all over the world. It is an impressive operation that, in 2020 alone, helped 616,210 people in need in 23 countries with \$11.1 million worth of quilts and care kits.

Pat started serving as LWR Ingathering Coordinator 21 years ago, when she worked at the Michigan District office, and continued even when she was no longer part of the staff. At first, this was a huge undertaking: the system LWR had in place at the time required going to the Detroit rail yard to load 6 boxcars. This meant that the volunteers would load up the semis at different locations around the state only to unload them again, transferring the donations to the train. Pat would have help from local Lutheran

School students—sometimes 100 of them—which meant providing a catered meal to all, besides bringing cider and donuts to the rail yard operators. When the rail yards were no longer able to accommodate LWR shipments, three Lutheran High Schools with large parking lots agreed to be ingathering sites.

Pat shares: *“In this country we take for granted what we have; and over there, when you get a bar of soap, it’s really something.”* She told the story of a lady from her church who taught English to children and adults who had been in refugee camps. One time she brought her students to help load the truck in Howell. Looking at the boxes, one boy asked, *“What is this?”* When it was explained to him that those were the quilts and kits that are sent overseas, he said, *“So that’s where they came from!”* Those kids had received a quilt and a kit when they were in a refugee camp. They said, *“We wondered where it came from!”* According to Pat, stories like these are what has kept her going all these years.

Thank you, Pat, for the years of service and dedication. ■

Elisa Schulz is a staff writer, copy editor, and photographer for the Michigan District, LCMS. She is married to Rev. Dr. Charles Schulz (Concordia University Ann Arbor) and they have three children.

Pat will be retiring from the coordinator position. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested in taking on the Michigan District LWR Ingathering Coordinator role, please contact her at 517.548.2435 or by email at pschuk58@gmail.com.

DECEMBER 2021

In This Milestone Year, CEF Helps Ministries Adapt to Challenging New Realities

For a mission-driven ministry, it can be wise to pause and reflect, to revisit your beginnings, and to take stock of how far you've come.

Church Extension Fund did exactly that in 2021, as we celebrated our 120th year. In the June/July CEF Spotlight, we traced a brief history of our ministry, from early meetings in our board members' homes, through our mid-20th Century moves to offices in Detroit, then Ann Arbor, and right on up to our innovations of the Internet age.

Today we're creating new CEF history in a time like no other in our living memory. Who'd have known, just two years ago, that we'd be marking our 120th birthday in seemingly unprecedented times? Yet if CEF's 12 decades have demonstrated anything, it's that we've persisted and endured in our mission no matter what the world's challenges.

Whether in times of peace or war, economic boom or economic bust, CEF has forged ahead to continue to meet the investing and lending needs of Lutherans and their churches in Michigan. There'll be no shaking us from this resolve in the next 120 years either.

Why are we so sure in our purpose? One reason is that



you, the faithful, inspire us. But even more importantly: It's God's plan. It's what He wants from us. All glory to God as CEF continues to help build His Kingdom in all that we do, in partnership with you.

Making Virtual a Reality

When the pandemic first hit, and social distancing became a must, Michigan District churches scrambled to find ways to continue holding services. Online was clearly the answer.



Whether in times of peace or war, economic boom or economic bust, CEF has forged ahead to continue to meet the investing and lending needs of Lutherans and their churches in Michigan.

Yet not all churches were as technologically equipped as they needed to be.

Enter CEF. There was no way we'd stand idly by while congregations struggled to meet virtually. This year we introduced the Equip+Connect Grant & Loan Program. The **Equip grant** provides up to \$2,500 to buy new or innovative technology, while the **Connect grant** offers up to \$500 toward the cost of technology training. A preferred-rate CEF loan can cover any additional costs of the technology upgrade.

To date, roughly 60 churches have received Equip+Connect grants. In all, they've used the funds to purchase some \$150,000 worth of upgraded technology. Most have bought cameras, computers, and sound equipment such as microphones and speakers.



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.



Redeemer's new building will retain the old structure's much-loved Colonial styling, yet with larger, more accessible, and better-equipped spaces.

There's still time to take advantage of the Equip+Connect grants. They're retroactive to January 2021, and will be available through March 2022. Contact CEF for details.

Removing Limitations

CEF continues to help churches hold services in the physical face to face world as well.

For example: Reconstruction continues at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, in Birmingham, north of Detroit. This was first reported in September's CEF Spotlight. It's a complete rebuild of Redeemer's original 70-year-old sanctuary, which had outlived its ability to serve the church's vibrant congregation. Redeemer is funding the project through a blend of a capital campaign and an affordable construction loan from CEF.

The new building is on schedule to complete in 2022. Improvements in the sanctuary will include wider aisles and

pews, a bigger balcony, and a new pipe organ. Flexible seating will allow up to 600 worshippers. Entering directly into the sanctuary will be an expanded "Town Square", Redeemer's light-filled narthex. Downstairs will add a second music room, more youth classrooms and meeting space, and a new bridal lounge.

"Our foremost goals," says Reverend Randall Schlak, Redeemer's Senior Pastor, "are to remove the limitations our historical building was placing on our ministries, and to ensure our new spaces will enable more welcoming and engaging experiences in faith."

Well put, Pastor Schlak—and reflective of CEF's own future-looking view as we prepare to continue serving Lutheran church members and ministries in the decades ahead.



Church Extension Fund

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

3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-3098 ■ www.mi-cef.org

Offices: 800-242-3944

The information provided here is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular. CEF investments are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC, or any other governmental agency.



Beyond the WALLS with Jesus

1 Peter 2:12

© Vladislav Zolotov/iStock

“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

It is difficult to live honorably as a child of God when the Church is increasingly marginalized and ridiculed. To be sure, this is a consequence of evil in the world, but it is also because God’s people don’t know the Scriptures and/or because they compromise what they believe or how they live in the world.

God’s Word is clear. We are “in the world” (John 17:11; Philippians 2:15) as “elect exiles” (1 Peter 1:1), and the nations (“the gentiles”) will observe our good deeds through our speech and actions. Because of this witness, Peter writes, even the gentiles will “glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12), and Paul says that one day: “... every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11).

Please join us for the 2022 Theological Conference on Saturday, February 5, at Our Savior, Lansing. Guest speakers include Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, Rev. Dr. Theodore J. Hopkins, Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer, and Mr. Greg S. Baylor. These excellent speakers will guide us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to pray and determine when to defend the walls of the Church and how our faith can shine as we engage with the culture outside those walls.

Cost is \$20/person, \$15/student. Visit michigandistrict.org/theological22 for more information or to register.



Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer



Rev. Dr. Theodore J. Hopkins



Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer



Mr. Greg S. Baylor



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

People of Hope ... Vigorously Making Known the Love of Christ

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May I be one of the first to wish you and your family a **blessed advent and a most joyous Christmas.**

Let me continue by sharing a Latin phrase with you: “*Esse quam videri*,” meaning, “*to be rather than to seem.*” Perhaps a better translation of this phrase would be, “*if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.*” This may seem like an unusual way to begin my annual Christmas Appeal letter, but please allow me to explain.

Friends, the Michigan District is blessed to have several Innovative Missional Ministries. These ministries understand—and strive to meet—the needs of their rural and urban communities and the most vulnerable of people in them. They do so, even **today**, because of their continual, prayerful adaptation to engage the ever-changing environment around them. This was most evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when what was previously working well needed to be modified or changed completely—sometimes very quickly—to meet a new community need.

It is because of their ability to react and respond consistently in love that these Innovative Missional Ministries were able **to remain relevant in the exact moment in which they serve.** These ministries became—and remain—truly vital to their communities. They had “*to be*” to remain relevant to those they serve today. If they were “*to only seem*” relevant by doing what they had done in the past during these turbulent times, these ministries would have run the risk of falling short of meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of everyone whom God loves—especially “*the least of these*” (*Matthew 25:40*).

Great examples of this are the numerous outreach opportunities within our *Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E)* urban ministries in Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, Benton Harbor, and Grand Rapids. As the environment changed, the ministries adapted, pivoted, did whatever was necessary—sometimes uniquely in each of these locations—to faithfully serve and minister to their constituents and their communities.

Even more importantly, they were able to continue sharing Jesus by delivering the Gospel to many children,

Continued on reverse side



Bethany Lutheran Church, Detroit holds a Food Bank twice a month.

families, and individuals. The saved were disciplined and the lost learned they have a Savior.

I am very thankful for and proud of the Innovative Missional Ministries of the Michigan District. I am incredibly grateful for their leadership that did not rest on past success or become discouraged. Instead, they chose to strategically forge ahead by adapting quickly and decisively with a zeal for God’s lost ones and a desire to grow Christ’s Kingdom while serving.

Allow me to close with a quote from Rev. Mitch Vogeli, pastor of Nativity Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Michigan. These meaningful words of Pastor Vogeli appear in our *Here We Stand* campaign booklet:

“In our culture today, very few unchurched people start out looking for a church service. They are, however, longing for a place to feel cared for, and a place where they can care for others. When they meet Jesus there, it all makes sense.”

Dear friends in Christ, the above words share why the Innovative Missional Ministries of the Michigan District are critical to their communities. These ministries give people an opportunity to meet Jesus while other personal needs and concerns are addressed.

I humbly ask you to prayerfully consider supporting the various Innovative Missional Ministries of the Michigan District that are—and those yet to be. Perhaps you could start one or be a part of one. As you make your Christmas and year-end gift-giving decisions, please consider a generous investment in the lives of those served by these ministries.



Franklin Avenue Mission, Flint clothing bank.

Your generosity will not only be an immediate blessing as you help the vulnerable, *“the least of these,”* but will also be an eternal blessing to many as they meet Jesus and become part of His family, we pray, for eternity.



Rev. Tyler Cronkright of Family of God, Detroit performs a baptism.

THANK YOU! Thank you in advance for your prayerful consideration and generous response.

Again, Merry Christmas! Again, thank you! ... as you consider making a difference in someone’s life today and for eternity.

Your brother in Christ and fellow servant,

Rev. David P. E. Maier

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



Yes, President Maier, I would like to support the Innovative Missional Ministry Initiative of *Here We Stand!*

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

My gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.

Donate online at michigandistrict.org/christmasappeal or please make checks payable to Michigan District, LCMS and send to:

Attn: Development Department
Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Your generous gift will qualify for a 10% match from the Michigan District Church Extension Fund campaign matching funds commitment.

Lutheran Hour Ministries are again offering Advent Devotions

The birth of the Savior is celebrated again this year in *Child of Promise*, a joyful look at the miracle of Jesus' birth. From the beginning, foretold in Genesis and proclaimed throughout the Old Testament, God announced the coming Messiah to a wayward world. In Jesus Christ, that promise was fulfilled.

Each year Christians reflect on the hope God offers the world at Christmas. Born unto us—God's Son, our Savior—Jesus is the fulfillment of the Father's promise to send a Redeemer. In the Christ Child—the *Child of Promise*—we have the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of life eternal.

Seasonal Devotions for Advent and Lent are available in both English and Spanish. Perfect for personal reflection or to share with family, friends, and congregations, these meditations will help you prepare to celebrate the true meaning of these seasons.

Daily Devotions from Lutheran Hour Ministries will help strengthen and encourage your faith as you do the same for others. Have them delivered right to your inbox, podcast the audio devotional, access them on



LUTHERAN HOUR
MINISTRIES
www.lhm.org

your mobile device through the FREE app, or listen with Spotify, iHeart Radio, Alexa, or Google Home.

These devotions can be a witness tool that helps open the way for faith conversations. When sharing them with others, be sure to pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of your friend and bless all interactions with your friends and family. You might want to exchange stories of family Christmas traditions or start new ones by inviting them to Advent or Christmas services, especially if the Christmas season is stressful or depressing.

Visit lhm.org to learn more about these opportunities.



Michigan District, LCMS presents

Lutheran Adult Gathering

October 14–16, 2022 | Mackinac Island, Michigan
michigandistrict.org/lag22

Save the Date

IN HIS PRESENCE

Throughout All Generations

Psalm 90:1

listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word.

Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. No colored paper was available in the city. Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel (cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia) were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States.

The orphans were busy assembling their manger as I walked among them to see if they needed any help. All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat—he looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger.

Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger. Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at his completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously. For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately—until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger.

Then Misha started to ad lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, “And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, “If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?” And Jesus told me, “If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.” “So I got into the



© Jaap Willem VStock

manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him—for always.”

The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him—FOR ALWAYS ... in his heart ... [A Russian Christmas Story - “For Always.” Author: Will Fish] (<https://www.epm.org/resources/1999/Dec/1/russian-christmas-story-always/>)

Thank you, Jesus, that this is true for each and every one of us as well.

Finally, inevitably, Jesus came to make His home—heaven—... your home. Then, we will finally understand and experience what it means to be “Home for the Holidays” ... for eternity.

A big attraction for those who live in Michigan is Mackinaw Island and its iconic Grand Hotel. If you have never been there, please consider joining the Lutheran Adult Gathering (LAG) there next October 14–16, 2022. Pat and I had our first experience at “The Grand” during such a Lutheran Adult Gathering more than a decade ago. What immediately struck us during our stay there was what we, and others, saw as a vivid and beautiful correlation to Jesus' words in John 14. Often these words are read at funerals to remind those that live that they are not “home” yet; that the best is yet to come, and not to settle for earth when heaven awaits.

Jesus, who has just spoken to His disciples about his suffering and death, also asserts bold, comforting, encouraging truth, in an exquisite picture:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. My Father's house (think The Grand) has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1–3).

The Grand is this giant, white, magnificent mansion that has room after room, bedroom after bedroom, of elegantly adorned and furnished rooms! What a blast, what a joy, it will be to be in God's home and finally see and be with Jesus! ... And, also, to be with all those who have gone before us in the faith! Finally together! Finally, “AT HOME for the Holidays.” FOREVER! No more pain, no more separation, no more sin or sickness. No more death, this last enemy being destroyed for good (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Of course, what was most important in Jesus' discourse in John 14 were His clear words of invitation, truth, and love:

“‘You know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:4–6).

It’s Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus, for your invitation and love, and for being “the way and the truth and the life,” which “life” will truly be fulfilled when we are home in Your home in heaven with You for all eternity.

Friends, you are forgiven, loved, empowered, purposed. Live each day—boldly and courageously through and for Jesus—for others as His representatives in this world. May He use our life, witness, and confession that they too may know (believe in) Him who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” ... the only Person through whom humanity will ever be saved and eternally “Home for the Holidays.”

In Jesus, whose birth we celebrate, you are always ... **Welcome Home!** ▀



Merry Christmas!
In His Holy Name, Amen.

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

** All Scripture quotes taken from NIV unless otherwise noted.*



THE HYMNAL PROJECT

**Music for
Worship
Devotion Time**

Variety of Formats
MP3
Instrumental
Lead Vocals
Videos with Lyrics
Leadsheets

 thehymnalproject.com



Your Investment Builds Churches

When you invest with Church Extension Fund your investment helps to renovate and build churches and schools, just like St. John, Fraser (pictured). Pastor Smith of St. John says about their recent renovation, “CEF is very supportive of the work. They don’t simply supply the money, they have worked with our staff for years to make it all come together.”



Church Extension Fund

Office:

800-242-3944

24/7 Interest Rates:

800-232-7313

Website:

www.mi-cef.org



The information provided here is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular. CEF investments are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC, or any other governmental agency.

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Tyler Cronkright (SMP, Family of God, Detroit) to dual parish of Family of God/St. Stephen, Detroit
Rev. Thomas Fischer (Three Oaks) to Associate, Immanuel, Bridgman
Rev. Greyson Grenz (Trinity, Wyandotte) to dual parish of Trinity/Community, Wyandotte/Flat Rock

Status and Title Change

Rev. Alexander (Bud) Koppel (Muskegon) to Candidate
Rev. Afzal Masih (Byron Center) to Candidate
Rev. Rodney Morrison (St. Helen) to Emeritus
Rev. Steven Thiel (Freeland) to Emeritus
Rev. Howard Travis (West Branch) to Emeritus

Reinstated to the Roster

Rev. Kenneth Huner to Emeritus

Removed from the Roster

Rev. William Willenbrock

Called Home

Rev. Dr. John Herzog
Rev. Harry White

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Duncan, Amy (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
Hyslop, Scott (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Zion, Dallas, TX
Kempin, Karen (Candidate) to St. John's, Midland
Krueger, Steven (Community, Flat Rock) to Redeemer, Austin, TX
Priem, Sadie (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Zion, Bay City

Change of Status

Hire, Matthew (Community, Flat Rock) to Candidate
Huth, Daniel (Trinity, Davison) to Candidate
Miller, Adrienne (Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton) to Candidate

Transferred Into District

Goehmann, Heidi (Nebraska District) as Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Eckstorm, Kay (Emeritus) to Florida-Georgia District
Krueger, Steven (Community, Flat Rock) to Texas District

Reinstated to the Roster

Lemke, George
VanTol, Rebecca

Removed From Roster

Carver, Logan
Knopf, Jamie

Called Home

Schempf, Richard

A complete up-to-date listing of Calls and Vacancies can be found at michigandistrict.org.



Calendar of Events

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

DECEMBER 2021

23–24 District Office Closed
24 Christmas Eve
25 Christmas Day
31 District Office Closed

JANUARY 2022

18 Board of Directors
St. Luke, Ann Arbor
23–29 National Lutheran Schools Week

FEBRUARY 2022

3–4 Snow Tire Conference
Martin Luther High School, Lansing
5 Michigan District Theological Conference
Our Savior, Lansing
26 Retirement Conference
Holy Cross, Flushing

MARCH 2022

2 Ash Wednesday
4–6 State Basketball Tournament
Concordia University and St. Paul, Ann Arbor
15 Board of Directors
St. Luke, Ann Arbor

APRIL 2022

1–3 The Katie
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City
10 Palm Sunday
14 Maundy Thursday
15 Good Friday
17 Easter
24–26 Office Personnel Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City

MAY 2022

3–4 South & East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
4–5 Circuit Visitors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
9–11 North & East Pastors Conference
Garland Lodge & Resort
14 District Convention Floor Committee Meetings
District Office, Ann Arbor
16–17 West Pastors Conference
Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City
25–26 Intentional Interim Spring Conference
Michindoh, Hillsdale