

August 2023

# michigan IN TOUCH

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

Shared Weakness & Brokenness  
 Gathering of Individual Persons  
 Bible Reading  
 Small Group Ministry  
 Community Service

## Community of Health

### HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

## Community of Health

by Rev. David A. Davis

How do you describe your congregation? Small, medium, large, mega? What about conservative, liberal, confessional, liturgical, contemporary? Is it dying, surviving, thriving?

Would you describe it as a community of health? Whether you are a lay person or a pastor, let me encourage you to consider your congregation as a community of health. Is it one? What would it take for it to be so?

Focus on the following five points.

*continued on page 2*

© Genesis/LightStock, LLC

## michigan IN TOUCH

Official Periodical of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
August 2023, Volume 22, No. 7  
ISSN: 1538-8115 (print)  
ISSN: 2331-8619 (online)

Rev. David A. Davis, President  
Debby S. Fall, Editorial Manager

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

©2023 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](http://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).

## Table of Contents

- 1 Healthy Congregations
- 4 Healthy Workers
- 7 Great Compassion
- 10 Church Extension Fund
- 12 LLL
- 13 News & Events
- 15 Special Recognition
- 20 Calls and Roster Update
- 20 Calendar of Events



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

888.225.2111  
[intouch@michigandistrict.org](mailto:intouch@michigandistrict.org)  
[michigandistrict.org](http://michigandistrict.org)

continued from page 1

**First**, help your congregation be a gathering of individual persons. See each person not as a part of a group or some sort of “identity.” Rather, see each person as an individual who bears, admittedly in a broken way, the image of God.

Groups drive the discussion these days. This person is a \_\_\_\_\_ or a \_\_\_\_\_ or a \_\_\_\_\_. You fill in the blank. Identifying an individual by the group to which that person belongs nullifies individual personhood. Remember, God did more than create humanity; he created Adam and Eve, two individual persons. Each person is an individual for whom Christ died.

Why is this important? It is easy to write off or devalue whole groups of people; it is hard to ignore an individual person. My mother used to say, “Be nice to that person, that is someone’s little boy or girl.” Years ago I read a study about motels that had policies against renting to certain groups of people. It turns out that when an individual of that group asked for a room, often the policy was not enforced. The difference lay in the individual as a person. Human dignity derives from individual personhood.

**Second**, help your congregation build on the premise of shared weakness and brokenness. The common denominator is our need for Christ. Don’t look first or foremost to the assets that people bring to the table, but rather the areas of hurt, brokenness, and need. Jesus does not build upon our strengths but on our weaknesses. He told Paul, “*My power is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). A congregation is a community of health when it receives and cares for the weak, the “useless,” the hurting, the needy.

**Third**, help your congregation become devoted to the regular habit of thorough Bible reading. Jesus said, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:31–32). We meet Jesus in His Word. We experience truth and freedom in His Word. We receive power and direction through His Word. So much of life is lived without or even contrary to the words of the Bible. We should not be surprised that loneliness, purposelessness, addiction, sexual immorality, and many self-destructive behaviors are prevalent in a seemingly affluent and prosperous time. Across the landscape we too often are a people unmoored from truth and enslaved by mammon and the flesh. The path to health runs through the Bible.

**Fourth**, help your congregation invest in a vigorous

small group ministry. Many have said people need a “Cheers” in their lives, a place where everyone knows each other’s names and, very importantly, notices when someone is missing. In such settings we care for one another, share burdens, celebrate joys, and experience the consolation of the saints.

The Church speaks much about the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion. We probably should also think more about Jesus being really present in His Word. But let us never forget the promise of Jesus to be present wherever two or three are gathered in His name. Small group settings within a congregation provide a great path to health because the Great Physician Himself is present.

And **fifth**, help your congregation develop an ethos and reputation of serving others within your community. Too often the Church is accused of looking in judgment or with disdain toward others in the world. As Christ followers we can have the eyes of Jesus who looked at the hurting and harried world with compassion. He saw individual persons as sheep without a shepherd.

As we freely receive, we freely give. As we experience greater health (body, soul, mind), we extend it to others. Certainly, we want others to have what we have in Christ. When we engage our communities with humble service, they will be drawn to Jesus and ask us to give an account of the hope that we have within. This spirit grew the Church in the beginning and through the years. It is what will grow the Church now.

It is time for Christians in America to quit worrying about and wringing our hands over “what’s going on these days.” We should quit obsessing over categorizing our congregations with labels like dying or thriving or liturgical or contemporary or any of a dozen other appellations. Here’s what our time and every time needs of the Church: that local congregations are communities of health.\* ■



Rev. David A. Davis serves as President of the Michigan District, LCMS.

\*For more (and deeper) thoughts on this, see Andy Crouch’s *The Life We’re Looking For*. This article grows out of that work.

Davis, David. “Community of Health.” *Toward Significance*, June 16, 2023. [towardsignificance.com/community-of-health/](https://towardsignificance.com/community-of-health/) All rights reserved. Used with permission.



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

# We're Here to Help

The Michigan District staff is committed to promoting the four-fold outcomes of the Michigan District as developed by the Board of Directors. Healthy workers lead ministries to more excellent health, producing new great commission and compassion initiatives in congregations and their local communities. Here is how the Executive Staff is organized to serve church workers and congregations.

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Rev. David Davis represents Synod in connection with ordinations, commissioning, installations, and maintaining the official roster of ordained and commissioned ministers of religion. The president provides ecclesiastical supervision. He visits congregations and church workers within the district and works with Circuit Visitors to promote unanimous participation of congregations in the submission of annual statistical reports. The President's Office works with congregations in constitution and bylaw proposed alterations, conflict management, pastoral vacancies, and by providing call lists. Mrs. Laurie Brown, Executive Assistant to the President, manages the day-to-day operations of the President's Office and its staff.

Under the President's Office, the Sower's Fund is administered for professional church workers who have various emergency financial needs and have nowhere else to turn.

## DISTRICT FACILITATORS

Lead Facilitator Rev. Randy Johnson (West Region), along with the three other regional facilitators, Rev. Mark Brandt (North and East Region), Rev. Daniel Meckes

(Metro West Region), and Rev. John Greig (Metro East Region) represent the District President. They do this by developing strong and effective working relationships with congregations and pastors; working closely with circuit visitors and pastors for the furthering of mission and ministries; networking congregations together; attending appropriate conferences; and interacting with pastors and other Recognized Service Organizations. The facilitators provide advice and resources such as consulting; demographic studies; strategic planning; and call process assistance. They provide support to congregations as they form dual or tri-parish agreements and cathedral model churches. District Facilitators also coordinate efforts toward new mission starts and mission renewal. They regularly contribute to the District's online Resource Library for pastoral and congregational needs.

## EDUCATION AND COMMISSIONED WORKERS

Mr. Travis Grulke, Superintendent of Schools, oversees Lutheran School accreditation, board training, principal meetings, and provides representation on the Michigan

*continued on page 19*



# Men and Mental Health

by Jill M. Haiser

Over the past two years, Wellspring has continued to serve the community by expanding behavioral health services across Michigan. During this time, we have come face-to-face with the stigma that surrounds mental health. And the only way we can combat it is with your help.

In today's fast-paced world, mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being. Seeking support for mental health struggles should be a universal right for everyone, regardless of gender. However, the stigma surrounding men and their pursuit of mental health treatment remains a significant barrier.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, men are less likely than women to receive mental health treatment. In 2020, only 37.4% of men with a mental health condition sought professional help, compared to 57.5% of women.

Despite progress in recent years, there is still a prevailing stigma that discourages men from seeking mental health treatment. Society often imposes rigid expectations of masculinity, perpetuating the notion that men should be strong, stoic, and self-reliant. Consequently, many men feel reluctant to acknowledge their emotional struggles or ask for help, fearing it may be perceived as a sign of weakness.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that men die by suicide at a rate approximately 3.5 times higher than women. This discrepancy can be attributed in part to men's reluctance to seek mental health support.

Here's how you can help. Engaging in open and supportive conversations with the men in your life can make a significant difference in breaking the stigma around men's mental health. It's specifically helpful when men take the time to check in on other men.

How do you do that in a meaningful way? Our Wellspring therapists have developed this list of conversation starters to help you create supportive conversations with males (and females) in your life:

- How have you been feeling lately? Is there anything on your mind?

- How are you coping with the stressors in your life? I know life can get overwhelming sometimes.
- How do you know when things seem “off” in your life?
- What do you enjoy doing to relax and unwind?
- Have you noticed any changes in your sleep patterns or appetite?
- What sources of support do you have in your life, and are they helping you?
- How do you manage your work-life balance? Do you feel overwhelmed?
- Have you considered seeking professional help or support?

Being intentional to create time and space for these important conversations is key. If you are going to take the time to truly check in on someone, please make sure you are able to be fully present and free from distractions. Here are a few reminders:

- Leave your cell phone in your car or pocket.
- Go to a space that feels safe for both of you. Sometimes going for a walk or grabbing a cup of coffee together is best.
- Make it a conversation and not an interview. Vulnerability is difficult.
- Don't solve their problem. Just listen and hear what they are trying to say.

- Schedule a time to check back in with them.
- If their problem is life threatening or urgent, don't leave the meeting without seeking additional help for them.

Remember, checking in on someone's mental health is just the beginning of addressing the stigma around mental health.

If our Wellspring therapists can be a support to you, please reach out to our counseling team at [wellspringtherapists.com](http://wellspringtherapists.com).

*Jill M. Haiser is the Vice President of Marketing, Recruitment and Brand Strategy and Chief Marketing Officer for Wellspring.*

#### Article Sources

National Institute of Mental Health (2020). *Men and Mental Health*.  
 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2021). *Suicide Statistics*.





# Concordia Plans: *Created for You*

by David Kuschel and Dawn Crosno

Concordia Plans is the benefits administrator of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is dedicated to serving LCMS organizations and church workers. Offering retirement, health, disability, and survivor benefits, as well as ministry admin solutions, CPS serves ministries and cares for workers so that the Word of God spreads.

CPS serves nearly 30,000 workers, 41,000 retirees and beneficiaries and 53,000 covered dependents and recognizes the importance of financial, emotional, and physical well-being for church workers. Ministries that would like to learn more about how they can work with Concordia Plans to provide workers faith-aligned benefits as well as resources normally only available to the largest companies can reach out to Traci Ahlbrand at [Traci.Ahlbrand@ConcordiaPlans.org](mailto:Traci.Ahlbrand@ConcordiaPlans.org). Employer elections for 2024 are in early September, and CPS would like to care for as many Michigan District workers as possible through programs including:

- **The Concordia Retirement Plan pension and the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan 403(b).** When ministries offer these plans together, LCMS workers have the best opportunity for success in retirement through the CRP's lifetime pension benefit and additional income grown through savings and investments throughout their careers in

the CRSP 403(b).

- **The Concordia Health Plan.** Through this program and its varying deductible and out-of-pocket options, workers have comprehensive health coverage including meaningful wellness programs to help them be well to serve well. In the CHP, ministries and workers are not in danger of losing coverage if health costs escalate.
- **The Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan.** Benefits of this plan offer workers financial peace of mind if they are unable to work due to a disability (including pregnancy) or when a worker or enrolled dependent passes away.
- **The Worker Wellness Team.** This team comprised of health and financial professionals serves workers by helping them understand their benefits, access tools and resources, discuss issues and concerns related to personal finance, plan and prepare for retirement, and more! They also offer complimentary financial one-on-one sessions, easily scheduled by sending an email to: [MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org](mailto:MoneyMatters@ConcordiaPlans.org).

Visit [ConcordiaPlans.org](http://ConcordiaPlans.org) to learn more. ■

*Mr. David Kuschel is the Senior Director for Communications and Advocacy and Ms. Dawn Crosno is the Engagement Strategist at Concordia Plans.*



Photos by Jeff Heisner/Michigan District, LCMS



# Providing *Hope* in the Deaf Community

by Jeffrey T. Heisner

Screams and laughter are heard throughout the neighborhood in Dearborn as St. Martin’s class is at recess. It is exactly what you would expect from your typical neighborhood school, but there is one noticeable difference: the children are not talking; they are signing using ASL (American Sign Language).

St. Martin Lutheran School for the Deaf has been serving the Detroit metro area for only a few years. It’s a ministry that has been much needed in this area for a while. The school’s goal is to not only educate all of their students, but to have them know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior within the setting of academic excellence.

The deaf classroom has lessons and problems covering the walls. Teacher Diana Rice, who is also deaf, says she likes to make sure her classroom is very visual. “Our class tables are round so the children can see everything and have fellowship with each other,” says Rice.

Rice is passionate about what takes place in the classroom. She has seen the growth that is taking place both spiritually and academically. Rice teaches biblical lessons in all the subjects, from math to language arts.

Rev. Tyler Walworth, pastor at Emmanuel, Dearborn, loves having this ministry under his roof and on campus. “This is a great opportunity for the Gospel, for children who are clearly not going to hear it, but to receive it,” says Rev. Walworth.

One student, Xavier, loves science. School wasn’t always easy for him, but thanks to St. Martin and Ms. Rice, Xavier has become a good student. “He had so little ASL, and he came when he was seven,” says Rice. “I can’t imagine, no communication with mom or dad... but now we’ve been teaching him, he’s developed, and he can sign. He’s a skilled signer; it’s been wonderful.”

It is great to see how the students are growing and thriving at St. Martin Lutheran School for the Deaf. To find out more about Deaf ministry in Michigan, visit [michigandistrict.org/deafministry](http://michigandistrict.org/deafministry). ■

Jeffrey T. Heisner is the video journalist and digital media director for the Michigan District, LCMS.



# Broadened Horizons

by Ryan D. Reese



**D**uring the winter season of 2022–2023, Trinity, Warren was privileged to partner in a Winter Emergency Shelter Program with Motor City Mitten Mission; Trinity, Utica; the Michigan District; MCREST; Harvest Time Christian Fellowship; numerous local congregations; and Macomb County.

From December through April 1, several Macomb area churches maintained a rotating homeless shelter with the intention of preparing Trinity, Warren to serve as a centralized host location beginning on January 9.

During November and December, members of Trinity, Utica worked tirelessly to help prepare Trinity Warren's unused school wing to serve as emergency homeless shelter. Without their efforts, none of this would have been possible.

On January 8, due to an emergency, Trinity, Warren opened its doors to house the homeless during the winter days. Overnight from 7 p.m. through 9 a.m., guests checked in and were served a hot meal provided by Harvest Time and partner churches. Volunteers and security officers ensured the safety and needs of the guests. At 9 a.m., Motor City Mission provided bus passes for the guests to travel to work or helped arrange shelter for the daylight hours. On days when heavy snowfall was present, or temperatures dropped below 20 degrees, Trinity provided arrangements for those who had no place to go.

December through April, the Macomb Winter Emergency Shelter assisted over 500 homeless individuals at different locations, securing the guests' property and giving them a place to stay both



warm and fed. On two nights of the week, Macomb Community Action sent representatives to assist guests in finding housing arrangements through government services. On Thursdays and Saturdays, the Wave Project brought a mobile hygiene truck with showers and provided hygiene products for the guests.

Throughout the course of the guests' stay, members of Trinity opened their arms and hearts in the hope of always being able to help not only in the physical needs but also to share the love of Christ. On the very first Sunday, Trinity had the singular joy of performing an adult baptism for one of the Motor City Mitten Mission workers and almost every week several guests joined in worship services. Trinity members volunteered regularly in the program. Relationships were developed on a first-name basis, stories were heard, and troubles were shared.

Trinity has been blessed by this unique opportunity to serve, bolstered by the love and support, both in prayer and financial backing, of the Michigan District through a Start New Explorer Grant and a Nativity Grant. Numerous guests were sheltered who might have been in severe peril due to the closure of a similar program in prior years after the death of its founder. The opportunity to partner not only with Trinity, Utica but also other local Christian churches and civic organizations providing for the needs of

those less fortunate has broadened the scope of the congregation's mission considerably and many new community contacts have been made.

During the warmer months, Trinity continues to partner with Motor City Mitten Missions, offering a daytime gathering location for guests on Wednesdays. Macomb Community Action and the Wave Project continue to stop by, ensuring that services are made available both in terms of self-care and securing housing options. The goal is that these guests will not require emergency assistance this coming winter. It is Trinity's intention to continue the Emergency Shelter program November 1, 2023 - April 1, 2024.

Trinity invites brothers and sisters of the Lutheran Church to prayerfully consider opportunities that reach out to those who are in need. They hope to increase the opportunities for fellow Circuit congregations and neighboring regions to partner, not only with both Trinities, but with each other, looking for ways that further assist the community. All congregations are encouraged to pray fervently for God to enact His will through them as well.

Through providing a network of love and compassion for those who are most in need, we create opportunities to spread the love of Christ in word and in deed and, together, we can be a blessing by providing both physically and spiritually for those in need. ■

*Rev. Ryan D. Reese is the pastor at Trinity, Warren.*

“Through providing a network of love and compassion for those who are most in need, we create opportunities to spread the love of Christ in word and in deed.”

1) Trinity partnered with the Wave Project and its mobile shower unit. 2) A few of the guests who did not mind a photo op. 3) Pastor Reese and a Mitten Mission Worker ready to serve! 4) Marilyn Leonardi, Don August, Hank Leonardi, and Melissa Tunison put the finishing touches on a farewell meal for the guests.



## Ministry Spotlight: Pastor Bryce Rosche

Rev. Dr. Bryce Rosche entered ministry a bit later than many other pastors. In fact, at age 66, he was the oldest student among his classmates when he began studying at Concordia Seminary St. Louis. But it is his unique path toward pastoral work that has made him the perfect fit for St. Matthew Lutheran Church, in Westland—and a powerful connection for Church Extension Fund (CEF).

Rosche started a fast-track program at Concordia Seminary in 2019. After graduating, he was connected to St. Matthew Westland by a childhood friend where he would serve his vicarage. And the rest was history.

“I knew as soon as I stepped foot on St. Matthew’s campus, something had to be done about this church’s roof and parking lot. At first, I started addressing the building needs as part of a community project I needed to complete for seminary class credit. But I never expected the full scope of support we have received from Church Extension Fund,” says Pastor Rosche.

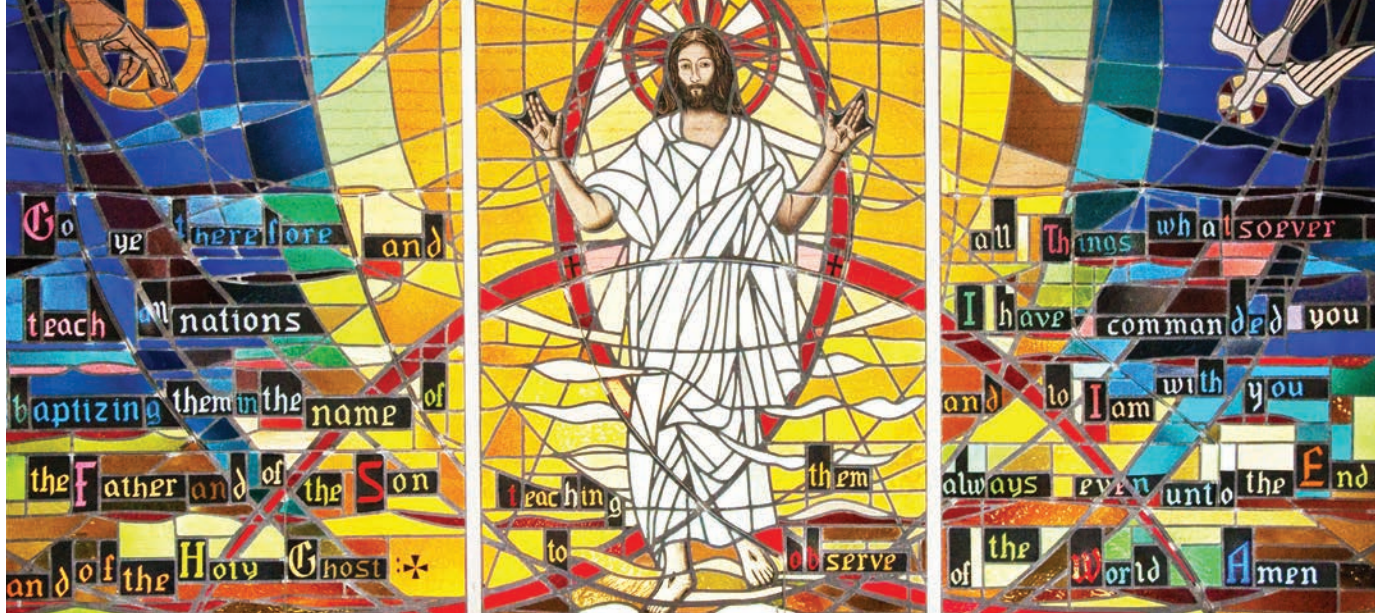
With the help of CEF and a capital campaign committee, the *From Above to Beyond* campaign was formed. The name of the campaign is based on James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above”. And this financial strategy broke down St. Matthew’s needs into three main categories: mortgage debt, campus infrastructure issues, and community outreach.



His childhood pastor first encouraged Rosche to consider a future in ministry work. He recommended Rosche and a few other students to attend Concordia High School, as part of a feeder program for Concordia College in Seward, Nebraska. But after falling in love with science and getting a degree in physical therapy, Rosche found a passion for his work, taking on several leadership roles. After decades of work in healthcare management, his thoughts returned to church work.







Then CEF created a clear payment plan for each of these main needs and helped develop connecting fundraising opportunities.

“CEF gave us resources that were approachable. We were so blessed to receive the financial know-how and ministry support offered to us by CEF,” Rosche notes. And thanks to St. Matthew’s capital campaign, the church has gone from one of the Michigan District’s most at-risk congregations to a steady and burgeoning church.

Pastor Rosche now proudly serves as the senior pastor at St. Matthew’s Westland, and he never stops dreaming of what his church can accomplish next. Right now, he’s excited about facilitating community outreach programs such as a food truck ministry, led by Tammie Tanner, a member of St. Matthew’s congregation.

“Tammie serves tacos to our school students at discounted rates on Taco Tuesdays. These are not like any tacos you’ve had before! And in exchange, she gets to serve her tacos from the St. Matthew parking lot to the community.” says Rosche.

“Through opportunities like bringing people together around food, we are creating intersections with people in their daily lives. That’s how we open doors to building relationships and the opportunity to witness.”

And none of this would have been possible without the guidance of God, who has led Pastor Rosche, the church leadership team, and the congregation members to a distinctive vision for ministry. Now bolstered by CEF’s support, St. Matthew can look forward to a thriving future in Westland.



To learn more about their ministry to the community by Pastor Rosche and St. Matthew visit: [mi-cef.org/news](http://mi-cef.org/news)

# Rejoice Greatly

77th LLL Men's Retreat at Camp Arcadia  
September 7-10, 2023



**Spiritual Growth | Fellowship | Relaxation | Recreation**



### Retreat Speaker

Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis  
Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour



### Retreat Chaplain

Rev. Dean Davenport  
Christ Our Savior, Livonia



### Retreat Chaplain

Rev. Tyler Cronkright  
Family of God, Detroit/  
St. Stephen, Detroit

**Cost: \$250 - \$100 Deposit at Registration - [camp-arcadia.com/register](http://camp-arcadia.com/register)**

**Camp Arcadia - 3046 Oak St. Arcadia MI 49613 - 231.889.4361**

## Community Worship Network Gatherings

The Michigan District LCMS, Community Worship Network (CWN), is a community of worship arts leaders, church music leaders, pastors, and students serving within the Michigan District.

CWN will support and connect worship leaders and their churches through prayer, inspirational learning, helpful resources, encouragement, and ongoing support.

### Upcoming Events

Zion, Kalamazoo - August 4, 2023 · St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth - September 30, 2023

For more information & to register

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



### Prayers in the Woods

Bethel, Grandville is a small but active church located blocks from downtown and on one of the busiest streets in the area. As a result, the congregation has been blessed with the opportunity to reach out to the community with events such as an annual Fourth of July celebration where they provide free hot dogs, water, and popcorn to about 700 people; evening ice cream socials; as well as a free community food kiosk outside.

Last winter, the congregation was approached by Sacred Grounds, which is affiliated with the World Wildlife Federation. Its goal is to aid in the prevention of erosion of soils from water running off hard surfaces like our parking lot, as well as introducing more native plants into the habitat. Sacred Grounds offered a \$1,500 grant if we developed something in our designated wetlands which is behind our parking lot. They designed a couple of plans which were reviewed and accepted by our church council for what would become a Community Prayer Garden.

This past spring, church members and non-church members began work on the Community Prayer Garden. The area was cleared and prepared for planting. Native grasses as well as native flowering plants such as violets,



Photos courtesy of Bethel, Grandville

irises, goldenrod, and asters were planted. Over 100 plants were planted in the garden.

Once the plants were in, mulch was placed in the prayer area. Members of Bethel created a cross from some of the fallen trees and two sturdy benches were purchased for the garden. In addition, more seating was created from sections of trees that had been cut down earlier by the utility company. Finally, stepping stones were put in place to create a walkway for the garden.

The Community Prayer Garden was dedicated on June 4, with the first prayers in the woods.

### Michigan Students Attend Christ Academy

This year's 24th annual Christ Academy High School at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. took place from June 18 through July 1. Fifty-seven young men and thirty-five young women participated in Christ Academy. Five students from the Michigan District attended this two-week discernment program that serves to aid high-school-aged men and women who are interested in theology and considering pastoral and diaconal work.

Please pray for these students as they discern future work in the church to stay steadfast in the true faith and that the Lord would continue to work through the pastors, teachers, and workers of our Church to continue to send out laborers into His harvest. To God be all the glory!



Photos courtesy of Concordia Theological Seminary

**THE HYMNAL PROJECT**

**Music for  
Worship  
Devotion Time**

**Variety of Styles &  
Formats**

**MP3  
Instrumental  
Lead Vocals  
Videos with Lyrics  
Leadsheets**

**thehymnalproject.com**

## St. Joseph Circuit Raises \$50,000 for Local Pro-Life Agency

The St. Joseph Circuit of the Michigan District was awarded a matching funds grant during Phase 3 of the LCMS *1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match* that has been established to support local LCMS congregations in supporting beginning-of-life care in their local communities.

Last spring, circuit congregations adopted LifePlan as a circuit-wide project that would provide both funds and volunteers to support the Gospel ministry of LifePlan. Over the past year, sermons and presentations were made at each of the ten circuit congregations. All three Lutheran schools in the circuit contributed chapel offerings using LifePlan baby bottles.

Circuit Visitor Rev. Michael Roth observed, *“It is truly inspiring to see the Lord bless the joint effort of our circuit congregations and schools for the benefit of life ministries in our community. In addition to raising a significant sum of money and enlisting a number of volunteers in a community-based organization, we have also created great awareness among our members of the work needed and being done with young mothers, their children, and families, all in the name of Jesus.”*

LifePlan ([lifeplan.org](http://lifeplan.org)) is a Christian, non-profit, pro-life agency with offices in Benton Harbor and Niles, with a third office to open this year in South Bend, Ind. Its services include free pregnancy testing, classes (prenatal, labor and delivery, baby and me, parenting), and support and encouragement through the sharing of the Gospel. This gift of \$50,000 will be used to renovate the new office in South Bend, provide for a Christian video training and Bible story books in both English and Spanish, computer tablets, fetal models, diaper bags, car seats, and

baby supplies. Additionally, members of circuit congregations are now serving as volunteers at LifePlan in a variety of ways.

Circuit congregations and schools include Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Berrien Springs; Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bridgman; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Buchanan; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Cassopolis; Salem Lutheran Church, Coloma; Trinity Lutheran Church, Glendora; St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Niles; Trinity Lutheran Church and School, St. Joseph; Trinity Lutheran Church, Sawyer; and Christ Lutheran Church and School, Stevensville.

Trinity, Sawyer’s Pastor Brandon Wittig commented, *“How blessed we are to be part of the work the Lord is doing to ensure that more babies live, and more families are supported in Southwest Michigan.”*

For more information about the LCMS Million Dollar Life Match, visit [lcms.org](http://lcms.org).



Photo courtesy of Nathan Chaffee

## LCMS Grant Opportunity/Ukrainian Refugees

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, millions of Ukrainian men, women, and children have been forced to flee their homes. Many of these refugees have settled—at least temporarily—in other countries. Through the United for Ukraine program, the United States government has created a pathway for some of these refugees to come to the U.S. on humanitarian parole, with the support of an American sponsor.

The LCMS is offering a special grant program to aid LCMS congregations and Recognized Service Organizations in sponsoring a Ukrainian family’s transition to the U.S. Questions about the application process should be directed to Human Care and Ministerial Support at [humancare@lcms.org](mailto:humancare@lcms.org) or by calling 314.996.1274 or 406.550.1900.

## LWML District Servant Day

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!! Saturday, October 14, 2023, is LWML District Servant Day. This will be held at multiple churches around Michigan from 9:30 a.m.–noon. There will be a devotion, food, crafts, and the assembly of personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief. For more information, visit [lwmlmichigan.org](http://lwmlmichigan.org).



### Meet Our New District Facilitators

In May, the Michigan District added three part-time Regional Facilitators to its staff. Together with **Rev. Randy Johnson**, the **West Region District Facilitator** and **Lead Facilitator** for the team, these men serve as representatives of the District President. They do this by working closely with circuit visitors and pastors; networking congregations together; attending appropriate conferences; and interacting with pastors and other Recognized Service Organizations, among many other tasks.

Here is some biographical information about the new facilitators:



**Rev. Mark D. Brandt** hails from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He earned his B.A. from Ann Arbor and Ft. Wayne, and his M.Div. from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He served a total of three congregations in Nebraska and Michigan before retiring from full-time ministry in 2021. Brandt

served as Michigan District Vice President from 2009–2022, and was a member of the Board of Directors from 2003–2009. He was installed as the **North and East Region District Facilitator** during the opening worship for the North and East Pastors Conference in Bay City (the service took place at Grace, Auburn). Mark is married to Karen and they have five adult children and seven grandchildren.

**Rev. Daniel C. Meckes** was born in Fairview Park, Ohio. He earned an A.A. from Concordia Ann Arbor, a B.A. from Concordia River Forest, and an M.Div. from Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Ind. Before going to the seminary, he served for two years as



the Director of Christian Education at Carmel Lutheran in Carmel, Ind. Upon his ordination, he served a total of five congregations in Michigan and is still serving part-time at Journey, Oxford while also serving as **Metro West Region District Facilitator**. He has been involved in the Michigan District in various capacities and is also a member of the Stewardship Committee. He was installed as the Metro West District Facilitator at the opening worship for the South and East Pastors Conference in Frankenmuth (St. Lorenz). Dan is married to Janelle and they have five adult children and six grandchildren.



**Rev. John E. Greig** hails from Painesville, Ohio. He earned B.A. degrees from Ohio State University and Concordia College, Ann Arbor, and an M.Div. from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He has served churches in North Carolina, Ohio, New Jersey, Delaware, and now serves part-time at First,

Algonac, Mich. He was installed as the **Metro East Region District Facilitator** at the opening worship for the South and East Pastors Conference in Frankenmuth (St. Lorenz). John is married to Kimberly and they have three adult children and two grandchildren.

District President Rev. David Davis says, *“God has given us excellent men to serve as District Facilitators working with Randy Johnson. Each man brings significant gifts to the table that will help to serve not just their region but the team of Facilitators as a whole. They will provide close contact with pastors and congregations from the District to facilitate networking, cooperation, and advancement of ministry here in the Michigan District.”*



Photos by Elisa Schultz/Michigan District, LCMS

## Michigan District Educators of the Year 2023

We are grateful for the hundreds of educators serving our Lutheran schools across the Michigan District. Each spring we recognize some of them with our Educators of the Year Awards. These individuals were nominated by their colleagues as being outstanding and going above and beyond in serving students, families, and their congregations. It is a joy to celebrate the wonderful teachers, principals, and directors that make our Lutheran schools a place where Christ's love is shared on a daily basis!

### Tammy Kelly – Early Childhood Teacher of the Year



Tammy serves at Peace, Saginaw.

Here are some comments shared by those who nominated her:

*Mrs. Kelly is a ray of sunshine! She*

*radiates positivity and a love for teaching and Jesus. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and the kids just love her to pieces.*

*Tammy goes beyond in her role as a teacher. She puts her students first and shows them the love of Jesus every day.*

*Mrs. Kelly is phenomenal. She is a true disciple of Jesus, spreading His Good News, and an excellent living example of His love to all of her students each and every day.*

Tammy is part of a vital ministry in our Lutheran congregations sharing Jesus' love with children at such an early age. We are thankful for her work both inside and outside of the classroom.

Congratulations, Tammy!

### Roxann Marchesi – Early Childhood Director of the Year



We are blessed with many early childhood centers throughout the Michigan District, and they all have administrators that play a vital role in the

success of Lutheran education. Roxann serves at Journey, Oxford's Early Childhood Center. Here are some comments from those who nominated her:

*There's not a Lutheran School Principal or Early Childhood Director who has done more to lead their students, families, and staff toward the love, hope, and healing of Jesus than Roxann Marchesi. In the aftermath of our state's first deadly school shooting, Roxann has uplifted and cared for families directly affected, mourning, and grieving their child's and sibling's death, and several families with all sorts of related trauma. She does all of this while supporting staff members whose families were victimized in the attack. All the while, she has led, guided, and directed the preschool to our best enrollment rates in years, and pursued and received several significant grants that have allowed us to expand the offerings and enhance the teachings of our preschool.*

*Roxann is a blessing to Journey and the greater Oxford community. Caring for little ones, their families, and the staff is priority number one. We are grateful for all she does to share the love of Christ.*

Roxann's ministry to the students, staff, and families at Journey is one that should be celebrated. We are extremely thankful for her leadership and dedication to her ministry. Congratulations, Roxann!

### Jodi Franz – K-8 Teacher of the Year



Each year we lift up outstanding educators who are doing extraordinary things in the classroom. Jodi serves as the 3rd and 4th grade

teacher at Holy Cross, Saginaw. Here is what peers had to say about her:

*Mrs. Franz has blessed the students, their families, and the staff at Holy Cross for nearly 30 years. She is such a kind-hearted individual and truly cares about each one of her students.*

*Kind words, hugs, and encouragement are a major part of her teaching style. She knows when to challenge a student academically and when they may just need a hug and words of encouragement. She has a passion for English/Language Arts and making sure students are learning and comprehending what they are reading.*

*Jodi is such a disciple of Christ, and the people that interact daily with her, whether they are students, parents, or colleagues, are truly touched by her kind heart!*

We are thankful for Jodi's work both inside and outside



of the classroom, and we look forward to hearing how she continues to have a powerful impact on those she has been called to serve. Congratulations, Jodi!

### Brittaney Cover – High School Teacher of the Year

It is our privilege to recognize Brittaney Cover as the 2023 Michigan District High School Teacher of the Year. She teaches English at Lutheran High School Westland. Here are some comments shared by those who nominated her for the award:



*Brittaney is the epitome of a master teacher. She has the ability to engage every student that walks into her room. Her kind and warm demeanor creates a welcoming and caring atmosphere for her students.*

*Brittaney has a passion for helping students that especially struggle in English. She has high expectations and is fiercely committed to seeing each and every student succeed.*

*The LW students, families, and staff are grateful for Mrs. Cover and the joy she has in teaching. That contagious spirit is a blessing!*

It is evident that Brittaney’s ministry to the students, staff, and families at Westland Lutheran High School is one that should be celebrated. We look forward to hearing how she continues to have a powerful impact on those she has been called to serve. Congratulations, Brittaney!

### Matthew Couser – Principal of the Year

Each year we lift up an outstanding principal who exemplifies what it means to be a servant leader. It is our privilege to recognize Matthew



Couser as the 2023 Michigan District Principal of the Year. Matt serves at Our Savior, Lansing, and this is what people had to say about him:

*Matt is always willing to go the extra mile, stay a little longer, put in more time, and make sure people are informed and cared for. He is well respected, highly trusted, and seen as a role model for our school and church family.*

*Jesus shines through Matt in his role as principal. He exudes a love of God, love for the church, a love for kids,*

*and a love for all people.*

*He is the most humble person I know and would never seek it, but he truly deserves the recognition for being an exceptional, outstanding, and exemplary Lutheran school principal.*

Congratulations, Matt!

At the end of February 2024, we will begin the nomination process for our annual awards.

### Petzold Serves Dual Congregation

Rev. Carl R. Petzold (pictured center front row) was ordained and installed on June 10. A 2023 Concordia Theological Seminary graduate, he will serve the dual congregations of St. John, West Branch and Hope, St. Helen. He and his wife, Amber, have 4 children and reside in West Branch.



Photo courtesy of Dennis La Tulip

## St. Lorenz Celebrates Retirements and Anniversaries

In May, St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth, had the honor of celebrating the retirements of Leanne Davis, Interim Principal, and Karen Bender, Physical Education Teacher. The congregation also recognized the 25th anniversary of ministry of Brenda Sievert, Preschool Teacher and Events Coordinator, and Scott Mueller, Family Life Minister. St. Lorenz praises God for these servants of Christ who have dedicated their lives to the Lord's service and sharing the truth of Jesus with God's children in their unique areas of ministry.

Photo courtesy of St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth



## Shanburn Installed

Rev. Eric Shanburn (pictured center front row) was installed as the pastor of Holy Cross, Warren on May 21. Prior to colloquy, he served at Concordia University Ann Arbor and Wisconsin as the Assistant Professor of Social Work and Director of the Bachelor of Social Work Program. He has worked in the community as an adjunct professor at Spring Arbor University, home-school co-op teacher, and boys' soccer coach.

He and his wife, Jennie, have two children and reside in Grass Lake.

Photo courtesy of Holy Cross, Warren



## Your Investment Builds Churches

When you invest with Church Extension Fund your investment helps to renovate and build churches and schools, just like St. Michael, Portage.

*“I would highly recommend any congregation work with CEF for funding. They use their resources for the Great Commission.”*

— Pastor Paul Naumann,  
St. Michael, Portage



Church Extension Fund

Office:

**800-242-3944**

24/7 Interest Rates:

**800-232-7313**

Website:

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



## We're Here to Help

continued from page 3

Association of Non-public Schools Board. His office is responsible for school statistics, annual reports, and State Sport Championships. He provides support to commissioned educators and assists schools that are experiencing vacancies by providing call lists. Conferences for commissioned educators include principal conferences, early childhood directors and teachers' conferences, school administrator conferences, and the tri-District teachers' conference. Mr. Grulke is also involved in the Hearts for Jesus efforts, Ministry Safe, and Youth Gatherings.

His office also supports non-teaching commissioned workers through conferences and as they carry out their responsibilities in areas of family life, youth, education, worship arts, and diaconal ministries.

## MISSION STRATEGY

The Director of Mission Strategy, Rev. Dr. Todd Jones, in collaboration with key executives and the President's Office, develops an annual mission strategy and manages the plan. He regularly gathers, compiles, and analyzes data and trends and communicates them to pastors and congregations. Dr. Jones guides the development of new church plants and coordinates the Michigan District Lutheran Ministry Leaders, providing support for great compassion ministries and their leadership. He collaborates with the District Missionaries at Large, ethnic ministries, and the Acts 2 Enterprise programs in Detroit, Benton Harbor, Flint, Pontiac, and Dearborn. In collaboration with the president and business office, Nativity Grants, Mission Grants, Start New and Start New Explorer grants are awarded. Several areas of broader mission reach include the Revive Fest and Campus Ministry. He also works with Communications in promoting and facilitating ministry presence online through the Digital Footprint Initiative.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Rev. Dr. Robert Kasper serves as Director of Leadership Development for the Michigan District. In this role, he develops and implements a strategic plan to create a "Leadership Pipeline" for the District. The goal is to support and expand the leadership capacity and ministry health of existing workers and to promote the identification and training of more leaders from within our congregations and ministries. Dr. Kasper helps congregations to identify, equip, and deploy "home-grown staff" through alternate



Photo by Elica Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

routes to ordination (SMP, EIT, CHS, and colloquy) when required, as well as the training of Deacons and Ministry Assistants through the Michigan School of Missional Formation. He is involved in building relationships with ministry partners at Concordia University System and LCMS Seminaries. Dr. Kasper is engaged with varied District conferences for youth and adults, as well as our professional conferences for church workers. These conferences serve as opportunities to encourage and develop leadership capacity within the Michigan District.

Under Dr. Kasper's leadership are specialized ministries such as Stewardship education, Commission on Church Worker Care, Community Worship Network, Parish Nurse Ministry, Intentional Interim Ministry, and Clinical Pastoral Education (Chaplaincy support).

## BUSINESS OFFICE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Vice President of Finance Mr. Chad Woltemath takes care of the day-to-day financial and administrative duties and property management of the District and is also available to guide and assist professional church workers and congregations in their business practices and processes through consultation and resources. Resources for congregations are available in the areas of worker compensation, a treasurer's manual, tax guidance, and employment resource guides. A Treasurer's Conference is provided for information sharing and to assist treasurers and financial managers of congregations.

The Business Office also provides event planning by assisting and supporting the various committees who furnish professional development such as workshops and conferences for District members. Some of the services offered are negotiation of hotel and speaker contracts, registration processing, publicity, and equipment needs.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Director of Communications Mrs. Debby Fall has the responsibility of the District's website, YouTube channel, two podcasts, social media avenues, the blog, and email correspondence. Official publications include a weekly E-newsletter and a printed supplement to *The Lutheran Witness*, *Michigan In Touch*. The Communication Team works closely with various committees, commissions, and event planning in publicity, presentations, printed material, photography, and videography. The team is also involved in a wide variety of communication initiatives and projects with the District staff.

Call on us. We are here to help. Visit [michigandistrict.org](http://michigandistrict.org) or call 888.225.2111. ■

# Calls and Roster Update

## ORDAINED

### Calls Accepted

Rev. Douglas Bender (Cedarburg, WI) to Associate, Immanuel, Macomb  
Rev. Alexander Garber (Eastpointe, MI) to Trinity, Livingston, TX  
Rev. Andrew Twietmeyer (Caledonia, MI) to Associate, St. Paul's, Hillsdale

### Change of Status/Title

Rev. Larry Loree, Sr. (Pigeon, MI) to Emeritus  
Rev. Matthew Starner, SMP (Wyoming, MI) to Candidate  
Rev. Kenneth Wise, Sr. (Clinton Twp., MI) to Emeritus

### Transferred Into District

Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Weber (Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany) from Lutheran Church South Africa

## COMMISSIONED

### Calls Accepted

Armbrecht, Carol (Trinity, Lisle, IL) to Peace, Saginaw  
Cmeyla, William (Peace, Saginaw) to Valley LHS, Saginaw  
Dashkevicz, Shirley (CTS, Fort Wayne) to St. Peter, Hemlock  
Donal - Fisher, Karyn (Shadow of the Cross, Farmington Hills) to St. John's, New Boston  
Massey, Madison (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to St. Peter, Macomb  
Nelson, Michael (LHSA Greater Detroit, Rochester Hills) to Peace, Shelby Township  
Pichan, Thomas (Hosanna-Tabor, Redford) to St. Michael, Wayne  
Reddeman, Rachel (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Guardian, Dearborn  
Reinbold, Tricia (Divine Shepherd, Omaha, NE) to Trinity, Sturgis  
Rinkinen, Jenna (Bethlehem, Sheboygan, WI) to Trinity, Traverse City

### Change of Status

Grimm, Ellen (St. James, Montague) to Emeritus  
Jackson, Kristen (St. John, New Boston) to Emeritus  
Siebarth, Pamela (Holy Ghost, Monroe) to Emeritus  
Voelz, Robert (Christ the King, Southgate) to Emeritus

### Transferred Out of District

Esselman, Adele (Trinity, Saint Joseph) to Missouri District  
Geyer, Stephen (Emeritus) to Southern Illinois District  
Lustila, Gerald (Emeritus) to Florida-Georgia District  
Spanos, Esther (Our Shepherd, Birmingham) to Indiana District

### Transferred Into of District

Armbrecht, Carol (Northern Illinois District) to Peace, Saginaw  
Fritsche, Christopher (Texas District) to Immanuel, Macomb

### Removed From Roster

Smith, Mallorie

### Called Home

Kell, Mary  
Yelden, Susan

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



# Calendar of Events

For more information about these and other events visit:  
[michigandistrict.org/events](http://michigandistrict.org/events)

## AUGUST 2023

- 7/29–8/3 LCMS National Convention  
Milwaukee, Wisc.
- 4 Community Worship Network Gathering  
Zion, Kalamazoo
- 6–8 Board of Directors Retreat  
Immanuel, Grand Rapids
- 8 Early Childhood Directors Day  
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 9 Early Childhood Educators Conference  
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

## SEPTEMBER 2023

- 1 DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 4 Labor Day  
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 5–6 Emeriti Pastors Conference  
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 10–12 Deacon/Ministry Assistant Program Conference  
Camp Arcadia
- 13 Circuit Visitors Conference  
Peace, Ann Arbor
- 25–28 Intentional Interim Conference  
Michindoh, Hillsdale
- 30 Community Worship Network Gathering  
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

## OCTOBER 2023

- 16 Board of Directors Listening Event - Metro East  
St. John, Fraser
- 17 Board of Directors  
St. John, Fraser

## NOVEMBER 2023

- 1 All Saints Day
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 19–21 Professional Church Workers Conference  
DeVos Place/Amway Grand, Grand Rapids
- 23 Thanksgiving Day
- 23–24 DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

## DECEMBER 2023

- 24–26 Christmas Weekend  
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 New Year's Eve