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IN TOUCH

HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

Don't Wait for a Pastor

by Rev. David A. Davis

We face a shortage of pastors. That is not soon. It is now. Vacancies are lasting longer. Pastors are serving well beyond what most consider retirement age. Small congregations are having to share pastors. Many congregations are interested in calling an additional pastor who is not readily available.

Don't wait for a pastor.

This is not to speak against the great importance of the pastoral office in the life of a congregation.

continued on page 2

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Table of Contents

1	Healthy Congregations
4	Healthy Workers
8	Church Extension Fund
10	Great Commission
11	Great Compassion
12	Development
13	LLL
14	News & Events
16	Calls and Roster Update
16	Calendar of Events

continued from page 1

It is to acknowledge the legitimate purpose and ministry of the priesthood of all believers. As priests, laypeople are called to lives of sacrifice, prayer, and proclamation.

Perhaps the pastor shortage, of which God is not unaware, is His call to laypeople to become more demonstrative in their calling as priests. While there are things that only a properly called pastor should do, there are many things that laypeople can do without waiting for permission from their present pastor or, in a vacancy, direction from the one to be called. Consider the following items for which you do not need to wait for a pastor.

Read your Bible, all of it, every year. Martin Luther strove to put the Bible in the hands of the laity, both men and women. Yes, pastors are key resources for helping to understand the Scripture and are called to be the public proclaimers of it. However, each Christian is invited to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word of God. There is power in the Word. There is Jesus in the Word. Responding to the Gospel invitation to read the Word will move Christians and Christian ministry forward. *Don't wait for a pastor to open your Bible.*

“Engage now, you and your fellow congregants, according to the various vocations and opportunities God has given.”

Build Christian community by opening your home to fellow believers. Build Christian outreach by opening your home to those who do not know Jesus. Not all Christian community and outreach are connected to a church building. As you know, the Church got its start in the homes of many. *Don't wait for a pastor to open your home.*

Work with others in your congregation to build a ministry to your community. Feed the poor. Care for children. Bless the elderly. Befriend the lonely. Look at, study, and then act on community needs that you and others from your congregation can meet. *Don't wait for a pastor to open your eyes to opportunities in your community.*

Spend time in prayer. Remember Anna from the birth narrative of Jesus? She was persistent in prayer. Persistent people of prayer have always characterized

the Church in her faithfulness. While we look to pastors to lead public prayers on behalf of the congregation, congregants have the priestly opportunity to be vigilant in prayer. Read Luther's introduction to the Lord's Prayer in the Large Catechism. He affirms the great power in prayer. *Don't wait for a pastor to open your heart in prayer.*

The heritage of the Lutheran Church includes the vigorous ministry of lay men and women. Our voting structure at conventions reflects this; each congregation gets two votes, one by a pastor and one by a lay person. Witness the contributions of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Witness the contributions of the Lutheran Laymen's League. I remember being taught at seminary, in a History of Missions class, that missionary movements are often driven by the laity.

Engage now, you and your fellow congregants, according to the various vocations and opportunities God has given. Jesus said, *“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18)*. Jesus is not unaware of the pastors there aren't. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a sermon on July 23, 1933, reminds us, *“But it is not we who build. He (Jesus) builds the church. No man builds the church but Christ alone.”* While Jesus seems to tarry in sending us pastors, be certain that He is at work by His Spirit now, day by day, in and through the priesthood of all believers to build the Church.

So, love your pastor. Respect your pastor. Learn from and serve with your pastor. Receive him when Jesus provides him as an undershepherd of the Good Shepherd. Pray for him to be sent if you are in a vacancy situation. But Jesus is at work now through his Spirit in your midst; don't wait for a pastor. ■



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



From Afghanistan to Portage to *God's Kingdom*

by Elisa L. Schulz

God's Timeline

Over 12 years ago, Mr. Amanullah Ahmadzai went from Afghanistan to Pakistan for his MBA. While there, he learned to speak Urdu. He also met Rev. Dr. Arshad Masih, who introduced Amanullah to Christ. Amanullah came to faith and was baptized.

Fast forward to 2022. In June, Rev. Vincent Iqbal, a Pakistani pastor who colloquized into the LCMS through POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach) and who is now an Urdu-speaking itinerant missionary, became a member of St. Michael, Portage.

In October of 2022, Rev. Paul Naumann (St. Michael, Portage) received a call from Rev. Farrukh Khan (POBLO) saying that Samaritas had placed Afghan refugee families in Kalamazoo, and they were looking for a church. Khan said there was a likelihood of more families being placed in Kalamazoo. Their goal was to start an Afghan Lutheran church in the area, and they asked if St. Michael was interested in helping.

Church Home

Rev. Naumann talked to his staff and the church agreed to collaborate. The POBLO team brought an Afghan man to tour the church in Portage. His name was Amanullah Ahmadzai—the one who had been baptized in Pakistan 12 years earlier. Afterwards, Rev. Naumann went to visit the family at their home. The family consists of Amanullah

and his wife Waseela, as well as his sister, Rahila, and 11 children with ages ranging from 16 to 1. Amanullah and Waseela have 8 children: Salama, Sarah, Rahmanullah, Edris, Fariha, Hadia, Yahya, and Zakia. Additionally, Amanullah adopted Rahila's children—Nargas, Sameer, and Sameera—as his own.

In December, the family of 14 started coming to church. Pastor Iqbal, a member of the church, began to instruct them in the faith. On May 28, 2023 (Pentecost), all women and children of the family were baptized at St. Michael, each having at least one sponsor from the congregation. Praise God!

Future

St. Michael is currently accepting donations towards the fund to support Amanullah financially as he serves as a missionary to other Afghans and attends EIIT (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology) so that he can be the pastor of the future Afghan church plant in the Kalamazoo area. If you would like to contribute, please send a check to St. Michael Lutheran Church; 7211 Oakland Dr; Portage MI 49024-4151.

Elisa L. 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.

Antidotes for Anxious Moments

by Kenneth A. Huner

“Rejoice in the Lord; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:4–9).

Anxious moments. How do we deal with them? There are a lot of anxious moments happening in the world around us. According to Dr. Nikola Djordjevic, MD*, here are some of the top anxiety statistics for 2022:

- Anxiety levels usually peak between the ages of 40 and 59.
- Panic disorders affect over 6 million people in the US.
- Antidepressant use increases with age, with 19% of those over 60 taking medication.
- 6% of the population have anxiety, as per anxiety statistics worldwide from 2020.
- Four in ten US adults have depression or anxiety symptoms due to the pandemic.
- 8% of children and teenagers worldwide have an anxiety disorder.
- 2 million Americans have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- 25 million people in the EU have anxiety, as per stats on anxiety prevalence.
- 19 million American have specific phobias.

I would like to suggest the Pauline method to deal with anxious moments in our lives. “Do not be anxious about anything,” Paul tells us in the Bible text above. Here are some Gospel-empowered approaches to deal with anxious moments in our lives gleaned from our text above. These approaches have certainly helped me when I experience anxious moments.

1. Rejoice in the Lord

When Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, he was in prison. He had very few friends to comfort and console him. In addition, he had some real enemies he

had to cope with. But, in spite of this, the letter to the Philippians, which comprises only 4 chapters, has the words “joy” and “rejoice” appearing something like 14 times! Joy just permeates the book of Philippians. He was rejoicing in the Lord or, you could say, by means of the Lord. It’s all because of what Christ did for us by His death and resurrection. It’s an inside job. It is unlike happiness, which is external, based on things that we experience outside of us. It’s an inside job through the power of Christ. But how do we describe this sense of joy? Here’s how one commentator describes this concept of joy: “When he [Paul] talked of joy he was, in reality, describing a settled state of mind characterized by *εἰρήνη* (“peace”), an attitude that viewed the world with all of its ups and downs with equanimity, a confident way of looking at life that was rooted in faith (*της πιστεως*), that is, in a keen awareness of and trust in the living Lord of the Church ... Again and again the command is, “Rejoice in the Lord” ... Hence, for Paul joy is more than a mood or an emotion. Joy is an understanding of existence that encompasses both elation and depression, that can accept with creative submission events which bring delight or dismay because joy allows one to see beyond any particular event to the sovereign Lord who stands above all events and ultimately has control over them” (Hawthorne, Gerald Word Biblical Commentary–Philippians).

2. Shine with generosity

Paul tells us “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.” The word translated “reasonableness” is *επιεικής* in the original Greek. It appears 5 times in the New Testament. And frankly, it’s a difficult word to

continued on page 15



“ What God’s *peace* does in the person of Christ
is to give us a sense of *Shalom* and protection. ”

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

It was a bright and glorious spring Sunday morning. I was in the balcony of my home church operating the video camera. Every few weeks it was my job to record the service for shut-ins of our congregation. The previous afternoon had likely been spent mowing the church lawn. Nothing was special about that Sunday. I was a Senior in high school at the time and, with Easter behind us, my school year was winding down. I was looking forward to attending one of our church colleges, thankful that our congregation had a fund that made attending one financially feasible. The Lutheran college I planned to attend had a good business program. I had no intention of going into church work. Little did I know at the time.

My freshman year of college was my first experience in a Christian school. I was baffled at how my Psychology 101 professor talked about the theory of evolution AND creation. I attended student-led Bible studies in my dorm that lasted sometimes into the morning. I ended up helping one of my buddies to run a lock-in at a local church. Through all of this it was becoming clear that, despite my best laid plans, God was calling me in another direction, one I had not considered. Looking around at my Christian professors and how they lived the Gospel in and out of class, I found myself looking into the education program.

Four years later, I was newly married, graduating from college with a call to serve as a teacher at a school in Las Vegas. I had friends and family at the time that questioned why anyone would take a call to Sin City. If I was honest, I had those questions too. And yet, I look back on those first years of ministry with a smile.

I am thankful for the dedication to Christian education shown to me by the members of my childhood

congregation at Our Redeemer Lutheran in Emmett, Idaho. Without their help, who knows what I would be doing today. I am also thankful for the members of Christ, Stevensville, who have likewise dedicated years of commitment to Christian education in our community. Due to the dedication of the members of Christ Lutheran Church, our school is affordable for our families that desire a Christian education for their children.

A few years ago, I got the opportunity to attend church again at Our Redeemer. As is often the case, it seemed so much smaller than I remember. A good number of the members have long since gone home to be with their Savior. A few members that I remember from my childhood still attend. It was good to see them and tell stories of where I have served. They still pray for me.

A lot of time has passed since the days of that young man mowing the church lawn and recording services for shut-ins. Little did I know at the time the plans that the Lord had for me. The world has changed a lot. The video camera that I used back then was the size of a suitcase; we now have a device that fits in our pocket. The culture of our society has changed a lot as well. It is my belief that Christian education is needed more today than when I entered this ministry. Over the years, a good number of things have not gone as I had planned. However, everything has gone according to HIS plan, and I am all the better for it. ■

Neil F. Webb serves Christ Lutheran School in Stevensville, Mich. as its principal as well as religion and PE teacher. He is a researcher for researchinlutheraneducation.com. He can be reached on Twitter @webbnf.

Not as I had Planned

by Neil F. Webb





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Check in on Yourself

by Kelly Menke and Laura Scheer

So often we are inclined to check in on others, but now we're asking you to check in on yourself. Pause and reflect on these questions.

Physical Health:

- Is it a struggle to get intentional movement into your day (e.g., a walk, jog, stretching, etc.)?
- How many servings of vegetables did you eat yesterday?
- When is the last time you visited your primary care physician or completed a suggested health screening (e.g., mammogram, dental check-up, etc.)?

Mental/ Emotional Health:

- How many days this week have you felt overwhelmed?
- Are you more forgetful lately?
- Have you or loved ones noticed you're more "on edge" recently?
- Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at night?

Financial Health:

- Are you worried about having enough money in retirement?
- Are you wondering how to increase your savings?
- Do you have an emergency fund? How long will it last you if your household income drastically decreased?

Sometimes when we muster all the motivation we can to take a step in our health journey, we're overwhelmed by the long road ahead and that stalls us from taking any steps at all.

Whether you're on the edge of taking the first step in your health journey or you're mid-journey and feeling discouraged, don't focus on the entire journey—focus on the next best step.

So, what is the next best step? Here we suggest some steps,

but by no means is this a comprehensive list nor are we the expert on you and what works best for you (that's YOU!).

Physical health:

- Park one parking spot further from the building than you usually do.
- Add a vegetable to your next meal or snack.
- Schedule that mammogram.
- Go to that annual physical with your primary care physician.

Mental/Emotional Health:

- Tonight, choose to read, journal or scribble instead of scrolling on social media or zoning out in front of the TV.
- Pray over your favorite encouraging Bible verse tomorrow morning.

Financial Health:

- Start or increase savings in your retirement. Any increase is better than no increase.
- Start an emergency fund. Research account options to see what brings the most value to you.
- Grow your emergency fund. Do a spending freeze for a short period of time, putting money saved into the fund. Any savings is still savings!

Taking care of ourselves can be an overwhelming journey, whether you're at the first step or step 10,001. No matter where you are, God is with you on your journey, enabling and providing for you to be a good steward of all He blessed you with. Don't focus on the entire journey, but just the next best step. He's with you; we're with you. Take that step! ■

This article was co-authored by two Concordia Plans employees: Kelly Menke, Physical Wellbeing Educator, and Laura Scheer, Financial Educator. Concordia Plans is a dedicated non-profit ministry partner created by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to serve you. For more information, visit concordiaplans.org.

SEPTEMBER 2023

Helping Marian and Tim Grothaus buy their dream home

When Marian and Tim Grothaus found out they were pregnant with their second child in 1987, the first thought for both of them went straight to their living situation.

Around this same time, St. John began to realize that the Grothaus weren't the only faculty members facing this issue. More than once, they extended a call to a potential church worker, only to be turned down because of the lack of affordable living options in the area. "One of my colleagues had a two-hour roundtrip commute every day from his house to school," Tim shared. "Especially with two small kids at home, I knew that wouldn't be sustainable for our family."

Throughout the whole process, Marian and Tim committed to praying together. "One of the simplest prayers anyone can offer to God is, 'Help!' In our situation, we asked God, 'What now?' If He meant for us to remain serving St. John, we both knew He would open a door," Marian recalls.

That door might very well have been Church Extension Fund getting involved. CEF had just launched its Housing Loan program, which to this day provides housing loans and down payment assistance to church workers; one of the first-ever church worker home



Left to Right: Marian, daughter Jessica, son Joel, daughter Bethany on Tim's lap



Marian and Tim in 2023.

The couple was already living with a toddler in a tight two-bedroom apartment, one they were loath to give up because of the ideal location to St. John Lutheran School – Rochester where Tim served as a teacher. Plus, finances were starting to look tight when the two agreed that Marian would stay home after kid number two was born.

So began the nine-month timer to crunch numbers and find a better home for the growing Grothaus family, one that would offer more space and an easy commute to work for Tim. The couple worked with a realtor in their congregation to look for homes in the area, but the housing market in Rochester was already beginning to boom. They quickly discovered that houses in their preferred location were too expensive to meet their needs.



The Grothaus family with children, grandchildren, and Rowdy, the dog.

loan programs in the Synod. St. John was an early supporter. CEF's low interest rate meant St. John would be able to offer the Grothauses an opportunity to receive a housing loan, and to find a place they could call home. By March of 1988, Marian and Tim were able to move their two-year-old daughter and two-month-old son into the new home of their dreams.

"Knowing that you are cared about by your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ can help you keep going. Our church recognized our struggle and helped support a strong future for our family. We are constantly grateful for how Church Extension Fund made this happen for us," says Marian. Thanks to the CEF, the Grothauses have lived in that same home for over 35 years!

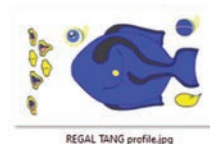
Since 1987, Church Extension Fund has helped fund over 700 home loans for church workers like the Grothauses throughout the Michigan District. To learn more about how this program works or to apply for a home loan, you can contact the CEF mortgage department.



To read more about the Grothauses journey to home ownership visit: mi-cef.org/news



Artwork courtesy of Allendale Christian Media



Lutheran Looney Toons

by Jeffrey T. Heisner

In the heart of Jenison, there is a beacon of faith that shines through the digital realm. Allendale Christian Media (ACM), an initiative of St. John Lutheran Church, is dedicated to spreading the message of Christ's love and fostering a sense of community through various media platforms, especially through its animations.

"People can think it's just cartoons, but no—it's animation and it's very popular in what people want to see. Disney built their whole empire on animation," said Kevin Collier.

Kevin and Kristen Collier lead the ACM ministry. Along with sermon recordings, talk shows, films, and streaming of church services, ACM is sharing the Gospel message in far-reaching ways. The Colliers created *Tiny Ocean Tails*—an animated series that shares biblical messages through cute ocean creatures. Right now, you can find their episodes on YouTube.

Another project they're working on is *Bible Bea*. Kevin just completed this animation. *Bible Bea* features Scripture lessons and even introduces children to Greek and Hebrew words from biblical times. "Each show will be a lesson from the Bible and Beatrice will describe what it is," said Kevin.

About a decade ago, the Colliers started this ministry with *Marty and the 10 Commandments*. It features Martin Luther nailing the 10 Commandments and their meaning to Wittenberg's Castle Church. These animations are also on YouTube.

With so many companies straying from family-

friendly shows, the Colliers felt they needed to fill a void. Their animations feature wholesome entertainment with biblical lessons. "This is my calling," said Kristen.

Kevin and Kristen have gotten some big names to jump on board and lend their voices to their projects. Corbin Bernsen, Marta Kristen from *Lost in Space*, and *Foreigner's* front man, Lou Gramm, are the voices of underwater sea creatures the Colliers have created.

Kristen uses the program Cartoon Animator 4 to create her cartoons. At the cost of just \$150, she wants other congregations to know how easy and accessible this program is for Lutheran classrooms. "You don't have to be an artist to do animation," says Kristen. "This is something a young person can use."

For more information and links to the Allendale Christian Media projects, visit allendalechristianmedia.com or watch Christ Clubhouse Season 1 Episode 1 of Christ Clubhouse Ep - Free TV Shows | Tubi (tubitv.com) or view at youtube.com/@allendalechristianmedia5653. ■

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



A Story and a Plea

by Penny Armbruster

I want to share a wonderful experience that we had at the clinic recently. It truly illustrates how our God, the “God who sees,” brings people to us for care and how you, the supporters of The Luke Clinic, play a vital role.

A previous patient came back for prenatal care. We were thrilled to see her and her son as they are both such a sweet family. She is a wonderful caring and loving mom, and we just adore her.

Sadly, we discovered she had become the victim of domestic violence that very morning and she was unable and afraid to return home. We called over thirteen domestic violence shelters—none of which had any room. We tried every shelter we knew of as far as Bay City, Lansing, and Adrian. Eventually, Pastor Tyler Cronkright from Family of God, Detroit offered to pay for a hotel. We decided it was best to take her to a local hotel close to the clinic office so we could take care of her immediate needs.

All she had with her was her purse, as she had fled without thinking about what would happen next. Thank goodness Meijer was open 24 hours! After the clinic finished, we took her shopping for some basic toiletries, clothes, and food supplies, dropping her off at the hotel around midnight. Pastor Matt Canion from Living Water, Whitmore Lake provided breakfast. A local business ran a tab for her for lunch and dinner. Volunteers from the clinic had given me money for food and supplies. The hotel we were using gave us a heavily discounted rate and offered to host future moms seeking shelter for us.

We tried, again and again, to find a place in a shelter to no avail. We invited her to come to church with us on Sunday, which was a complete joy. Living Water is a

founding supporter of The Luke Clinic and was simply thrilled to have a delightful family from Detroit join them for worship. Families quietly came to me and offered to cover additional nights in the hotel, provided gift cards, and offered to provide accommodation in their homes.

We transitioned this family to a congregational member’s home. Meanwhile, we were thrilled to discover that our patient could apply for a place in a Wellspring Lutheran Services transitional housing program. Again, volunteers stepped up to drive her to the interview. She was successful and is now safe and hopeful to start her new life from scratch. Volunteers moved her into the program; others took her shopping for food supplies.

Our staff was overwhelmed by how many people heard God’s call to help us provide for this precious family. All in all, it cost around \$850 to transition this family to a new home and an opportunity to live safely in the hope of a better future.

This is the work we do. Simply providing prenatal and infant care is often not enough. We do whatever it takes to “save lives, empower women, and build faith.”

Please know that our funds are in short supply. We operate this ministry by the grace of God and with the support of each one of you. We honestly will have to curtail some of our operations if we cannot cover our expenses. Please prayerfully consider a donation to help cover the summer budget shortfall.

To learn how you can contribute with your time or treasure, visit thelukeclinic.org. ■

Penny Armbruster is the Executive Director of the Luke Clinic. This article was originally published in The Luke Clinic’s monthly newsletter.

Meet the Michigan District's New Director of Development

The Michigan District is thrilled to welcome Mrs. Laura Thomas as our new Director of Development.

Thomas' impressive list of undergraduate and graduate degrees includes a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Individualized Studies, a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree, and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management, all from Eastern Michigan University. Additionally, she earned a Certificate in Fund Raising Management (CFRM) from Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Thomas comes to the District from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., where she served as Senior Gift Officer. Prior to that, she served as Senior Director of Donor Relations and Alumni at Concordia University Ann Arbor; Donor Relations Officer - Principal Gifts for the University of Michigan Health System; Manager of Donor Relations for Eastern Michigan University Foundation; and Fraternal Specialist for Aid Association for Lutherans.

Ray Zavada, the District's former Vice President of Development, comments: *"After serving the Michigan District for over 15 years, and retiring about 10 months ago, I obviously have been giving considerable thought and prayer as to who my successor would be. Laura Thomas' appointment is wonderful news for the Michigan District, and for me personally. I have been privileged to know Laura for many years and have seen first-hand the blessing she has been to the ministries she has served. She is a consummate professional and team player who will ethically, diligently, and faithfully serve the Michigan District and its large family of pastors and donors in a manner that will be a blessing to all. Congratulations, Laura!"*

In addition to her professional achievements, Laura serves as the Vice President of Communication for the Council of Lutheran Women and is the secretary to the Michigan District Stewardship Committee.

President Davis adds, *"Laura brings a wealth of experience to the position of Director of Development. She knows the people and ministries of the District well. Her background and training in the field are excellent. What most excites me about her joining our team is her great love for Jesus and, with it, a desire to see the development of His Kingdom in our midst."*

Laura and her husband, Gary, have three children and five grandchildren. They are members of St. Paul, Hamburg. Of her new role, Laura says, *"I've always loved living in the Michigan District and participating in ministry, education, and fellowship activities here. It's a privilege to serve alongside District leadership and staff to continue this work in a development role. With collaboration and support of congregations and people, I look forward with excitement to seeing God's plan unfold."*

We are excited to have Laura join us and look forward to the contributions she will make to the mission of the District. Please join us in welcoming her to the District staff!



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS



Michigan District, LCMS presents

2023 Professional Church Workers Conference

November 19-21, 2023 | Grand Rapids, Mich.

michigandistrict.org/pcw23

ABID

In Jesus

John 15:4-5

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

Former Pastoral Advisor Called Home

Former Michigan District Lutheran Laymen's League pastoral advisor, Rev. Rodney L. Morrison Jr., age 58 of St. Helen, passed away Monday, July 24, 2023, at his home. Rev. Morrison was born to Rodney Sr. and Linda Morrison on January 16, 1965, in Lansing, Mich. He grew up in Michigan and Florida, graduating from Bath High School in Mich. He joined the US Navy on April 18, 1986, and married Barbara Jean Smith on August 29, 1986, on Lake Marguerite in Grayling. They had a son, Shawn, in 1987.

Morrison was called by God and entered the seminary in 2003. He was placed at Hope Lutheran Church in St. Helen and was ordained and installed in 2008. Shortly after that, Michigan's Lutheran Laymen's League President Chuck Bennett appointed Rev. Morrison as district pastoral advisor. He served for several years. His father-in-law, Bob Hahn, had served as Capitol Zone LLL president.

Rev. Morrison is survived by his loving wife, Barbara "BJ" Morrison of St. Helen; son, Shawn Morrison of St. Helen; father, Rodney Sr. (Dawn) Morrison of Marion; mother, Linda Crisp of Calif.; grandson, Landon; brother, Travis (Diana) Morrison of CA; and sister-in-law, Debra Hahn of Lansing. Also surviving are many aunts, uncles,

nieces, and nephews.

Rod was preceded in death by sister, Theresa Rost-Thompson, brother-in-law, Craig Hahn, and parents-in-law Betty and Bob Hahn.

The funeral service was at St. Luke, Harrison on Monday, July 31, 2023, with Rev. Timothy Sheridan officiating.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Richfield Township Department of Public Safety.

Gospel Adventures Show

Lutheran Hour Ministries and Group Publishing have teamed up for an exciting new Gospel Adventure for kids. The *Gospel Adventures Show* is a weekly audio program that takes young listeners on a Bible journey with hosts Ben and Noah to learn from some of the best-loved Bible characters. Each 30-minute episode has a theme, a Bible verse, a Bible story, an interactive activity, and a story from a child. Share this information with the parents in your life, your children's ministry personnel, or your Christian day school. It's a fun way to keep kids engaged with the Bible in a fresh new way. Go to lhm.org for more information.

**Heading to College in the Fall?
Sign up at Campus Connect to get
connected with a local church!**



CAMPUS CONNECT

Michigan March for Life

On Wednesday, November 8, the *Michigan March For Life* will take place beginning with a rally at the State Capitol in Lansing at 11 a.m. There will be several key pro-life speakers. You are encouraged to attend this *March For Life* with your family, friends, and fellow congregation members as it is good for us to gather.

This march will clearly demonstrate that those who advocate for the lives of our unborn babies have not abandoned the battle. We stand at a critical crossroads here in Michigan. It will take time to undo the damage of *Proposal 3*, but we faithfully stood our ground for decades as we awaited the fall of *Roe v. Wade*. We pray that this rally and march will be a strong statement of that truth to our fellow citizens.

Visit marchforlife.org/michigan-march-for-life for more information.

2023 Lutheran World Relief Ingathering

The Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Ingathering will take place October 9-18 in various locations across Michigan. This regional event is where quilters and kit-makers can drop off donations to be shipped to LWR's Maryland or Minnesota warehouses.

Ingatherings allow many people to ship their donations of quilts and kits together in a coordinated and efficient manner, saving time and money. If you haven't before, consider bringing your quilts and kits to one of the ingathering sites listed at michigandistrict.org/lwrgathering/. Donations for truck rental and/or other LWR shipping costs are greatly appreciated.

For more information, contact Hannah MacAfee at hannah.macafee@michigandistrict.org or 734.213.3235.

God's blessings to you in your efforts to spread His love in a tangible way to a world that is in need!

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Antidotes for Anxious Moments

continued from page 5

translate. It can mean “magnanimity, largeness of spirit, gentleness, reasonableness, compassion, generosity.” Paul wants this to stand out in relationships to others. So, I say, let your life shine with generosity towards others! By doing this (with the enabling power of the crucified and resurrected Christ!), we actually begin to reduce unnecessary stress levels within ourselves.

Perhaps you are unconvinced that you have any significant moments of anxiety in your life. Peter Steinke, in his book, *Uproar—Calm Leadership in Anxious Times* (2019), says: “No cohort of people have had to live with such velocity and reach of change as those who are currently living. If you would check a thesaurus, you would find these companion words for tumult: messy, vulgar, strident, confusion, disorderly, noisy, and turbulent. We are living at a time not like any other ... We Americans are an anxious lot, with nearly forty million suffering an anxiety disorder. In the World Mental Health survey, Americans were the most anxious people in the fourteen countries studied, even more than people in Nigeria, Lebanon, and Ukraine. According to Google Trends, the number of web searches for the term anxiety has doubled in the last five years. College students are said to be more apprehensive than ever before. In her book, *iGEN*, Professor Jean Twenge surprisingly discovered that the *iGeners* “seem terrified.” Perhaps it is not facetious to say, as one commentator has, that we can make a strong case for being gold medalists in the Anxiety Olympics.”

3. Pray

Dr. Joseph Goldberg, MD, from the WebMD Medical Reference, offers this as a lifestyle change to help excessive worriers: “**Meditate.** Daily meditation—instead of worrying—may help you move beyond negative thoughts and allow you to become ‘unstuck’ from worries that keep your body on high alert. With meditation, you purposely pay attention to what is happening at the present moment without thinking of the past or future. Meditation decreases hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which are released during the ‘fight or flight’ or stress response.”

Paul would offer prayer. And that prayer would include a daily meditation on God’s Word. Our District President, Rev. Dave Davis, is encouraging people to establish an ethic of reading (or listening to) the entire Bible in one year. In addition, in our prayers we can daily utilize the



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acrostic guide of ACTS:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

As we immerse ourselves in God’s Word and pray to Him, God’s grace and love will shine, and His peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The word for guard (φρουρεω) is a military term used by Paul in this letter to the Philippians. One of the main functions of the city of Philippi was to keep the peace on the edges of the Roman empire. What God’s peace does in the person of Christ is to give us a sense of *Shalom* and protection. I call this pure grace that alleviates unnecessary stress and anxious moments in our lives.

4. Reframe your perspective

As Paul suggests (“whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable....”), why not, by the power and grace of God, change our perspective, from negative thoughts to positive thoughts, to replace “hot” thoughts with “cool” thoughts. I read somewhere that the words “think, thought, mind” appears something like 300 times in Scripture. What would it be like if every morning we woke up and put a pile of dirt in the tank of our cars and expect it to go somewhere? Sometimes that’s what we do with our thought patterns in life. I noticed my wife wrote on a 3X5 card from a book she was reading: “Every time you resist negative emotions and choose positive ones, you are actually rewiring your brain to be more positive and loving.” I would suggest that the Lord and, specifically, the Holy Spirit, enables us to do this very thing.

5. Put it into practice

“These things do or practice” Paul tells us. Remember the Nike expression: “Just Do It.” That’s the problem. We can’t just do it. Not by ourselves, or depending totally upon ourselves. **But the crucified and risen Lord forgives us, renews, and empowers us to put into practice these things!**

Thank the Lord for these antidotes from Paul to replace our anxious moments in life! ■

Rev. Kenneth A. Huner serves as the Dean of Instruction for the Michigan District’s Michigan School of Missional Formation.

*As published in the [blog medalerthelp.org/blog/anxiety-statistics/](http://blog.medalerthelp.org/blog/anxiety-statistics/)

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Scott G. Sommerfeld (Whitmore Lake, MI) to IIM, Sr. Pastor,
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
Rev. Nicholas T. Duerr (Mesa, AZ) to Associate, Trinity, Utica

Transferred Into District

Rev. Michael G. Duchene (Rochester Hills, MI) from Florida/Georgia
District
Rev. Nicholas T. Duerr (Mesa, AZ) from PSW District
Rev. Daniel J. Gruenwald (Grand Rapids, MI) from English District

Transferred Out

Rev. Alexander C. Garber (Eastpointe, MI) to Texas District

Called Home

Rev. Rodney L. Morrison

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Esselman, Luke (Grace, Coopersville) to Michigan District, LCMS
(part-time)
Hoch, Robert (Emeritus) to Lutheran Special Education Ministries,
Ann Arbor
Jones, Amanda (Candidate) to St. Paul, Flint
Kiehl, Peter (First, Clearwater, FL) to Trinity, Utica
Tucker, Lori (Emeritus) to Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Ann
Arbor

Change of Status

Cashmer, Leah (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Candidate
Godbold, Ellen (St. Mark, Kentwood) to Candidate
Harbaugh, Kara (Our Savior, Grand Rapid) to Candidate
May, Karlie (St. Paul, Ann Arbor) to Candidate
Petzold, Christina (St. Paul, Millington) to Candidate
Prisby, Tyler (LHSA, Rochester Hills) to Candidate
Smith, Gail (St. Matthew, Westland) to Emeritus
Trinklein, Susan (Peace, Shelby Township) to Emeritus
Witchger, Ann (LSEM, Ann Arbor) to Emeritus

Transferred Out of District

Belongia, Nathan (Guardian, Dearborn) to North Wisconsin District
Cody, Robert (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Nebraska District
Mellecke, Judith (Trinity, Traverse City) to Missouri District
Spear, Alexandra (St. Paul, Ann Arbor) to Northern Illinois District
Traska, Keith (Trinity, Saint Joseph) to Minnesota South District

Transferred Into of District

Reinbold, Tricia (Nebraska District) to Trinity, Sturgis
Witte, Dennis (Rocky Mountain District) as Emeritus

Removed From Roster

Headapohl, Virginia
Rankin, Patricia

Called Home

Dickhudt, Robert
Hurd, James

School Closings

Jenison, Daily Shepherd Child Care Center

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

Calendar of Events

For more information about these and other events visit:
michigandistrict.org/events

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
- 18 New Vicar/Intern Conference
Zoom Meeting
- 25–28 Intentional Interim Conference
Michindoh, Hillsdale
- 30 Community Worship Network Gathering
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

OCTOBER 2023

- 6 New Teacher Orientation
St. Luke, Ann Arbor
- 9 New Church Worker Conference
Ann Arbor Regent Hotel & Suites
- 16 Board of Directors Listening Event - Metro East
St. John, Fraser
- 17 Board of Directors
St. John, Fraser
- 28–29 State Volleyball Championship
Concordia University Ann Arbor

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

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FOR EFFECTIVE GOSPEL MINISTRY

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