

October 2023

# michigan

## IN TOUCH

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

### GREAT COMMISSION

## What Should We Do?

by Rev. David A. Davis

When it comes to salvation, of course the answer is “nothing.” There is nothing we can or need to do to merit life with God. There is no action of our own that can bring reconciliation between us and the Father. You know well that it is by grace we are saved, through faith, and not by our own works.

There is nothing to do. It has all been done. Jesus did it.

But when it comes to living life in the Kingdom, there is much “we should do.” The lives we live and

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the way we live make a big difference in the influence we have with unbelievers for Jesus and the fruitfulness of our living. What we do matters in great ways.

Jesus had much to say about “what we should do.” Just read the Gospels. Paul too had much to say about “what we should do.” Just read his letters. It turns out that, indeed, he “chose to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified;” he had lots and lots to say about “what we should do.” And the Confessions too speak to this. While the Lutheran Confessions accent that only Jesus saves, that there is nothing we can do to merit salvation, they still have page after page of guidance of “what we should do.”

Let me encourage you as a follower of Jesus to consider how you live, what you do with your words and actions, how you walk in the world. Consider these three principles.

“How we live, what we do, our works, make a difference—not in our salvation but in fruitful living.”

## The Principle of the Right Hand

Remember that Jesus is King right now and is ruling at this very minute to build His Kingdom. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, which means that He has full authority over what is happening in our world, nation, congregations, and your home.

Paul reflects on that in Colossians 3. He says that, because Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, we should set our minds on things above, not on earth. Therefore, we should put to death what is earthly and put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. We should forgive, love, and let Christ’s peace rule in our hearts. What we should do and how we should live is conditioned by the reality that Jesus really is King, is reigning now, and is working all things together for our good.

## The Principle of the Garden

Paul did not have to be a Spirit-inspired scholar to teach what every farmer knows: “You reap what you sow.” Plant corn; reap corn. Plant potatoes; reap potatoes. Plant evil; reap evil. Plant goodness; reap goodness.

As Christians, while we live under the grace of God in Jesus, we should keep this principle in mind as we live out our days under the sun. What we do makes a difference in the fruit, either good or bad, of our lives. Certainly sin, death, and the devil are present to throw monkey wrenches into everything, yet the gardening principle still applies. What we should do (sowing) really does impact what happens (reaping).

## The Principle of the Other

We are called to love God first and our neighbor as ourselves. In short, this means we are to think of “the other” (God and other people) instead of ourselves. That’s what love is: to be fiercely devoted to the wellbeing of another no matter what the cost. This is what Christians are to be known for. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that **you are my disciples, if you have love for one another**” (John 13:35). This takes work. It takes effort. It takes dying to self. All this is what we should do.

All to what end? How we live, what we do, our works, make a difference—not in our salvation but in fruitful living. The difference they make shapes the influence we have on the unbelievers around us. They shape the hearing that the Gospel of Jesus receives. We Christians are not in this world to battle against the culture, escape from the culture, or capitulate to it. We are to exhibit a faithful presence within it, doing the things of the Kingdom and doing things the way of the Kingdom.

In our lives, let us give ourselves over in thanksgiving and gratefulness for what Jesus has done to great obedience to the King based on the Principle of the Right Hand, the Principle of the Garden, and the Principle of the Other. In doing so, may our light shine brighter into a dark world that sorely needs it. ■



Rev. David A. Davis serves the Michigan District, LCMS as its president.



Top: Photo courtesy of St. Paul, Pontiac

Right: Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS



# 2023 Urban Summer Camp/VBS

by Elisa L. Schulz

Four Summer Camp/VBS programs supported by the Michigan District's Acts 2 Enterprise Ministry took place this year.

**Bethany, Detroit's** Summer Sports Camp/VBS (June 12–16) was another successful event combining sports activities and Bible lessons with more than 90 neighborhood youth from ages 6–17.

Activities were held at Messmer Park in Cornerstone Village. The young people were divided into six different age groups led by huddle coaches who mentored the youth and led the daily Bible lessons. The groups would spend time each day experiencing different sports activities including archery, yoga, lacrosse, basketball, martial arts, cheerleading, and Double Dutch jump rope. There were also crafts for the younger ones. The huddle coaches would share the Bible story for the day with their group and



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

then Pastor Bodley would gather all the kids together for a summary talk of the lessons learned. In addition, the kids shared a nourishing meal to finish the day. The 20 members of Bethany who helped with registration, set up, food preparation, and huddle coaching were joined by Lutheran Church members from Minnesota, Illinois, and Ohio who were participating that week in the Camp Restore Detroit ministry. The rain that threatened a couple of the days didn't cancel the Camp as the activities were able to continue at Bethany's gym. This year's Sports Camp was a great physical and spiritual experience for everyone involved!

**The Vine church in Walker** (Grand Rapids area) held its VBS program July 24–28. They had around 50 attendees, about 12 of whom were Jr. High and High School students who wanted to help. The theme was *Master Built* and focused on how God created us, how Jesus saves us, and how together the Holy Spirit causes us to do good works and equips us to share the Good News. All of the activities were Lego-themed and focused on building and problem-solving.

Matt Hire, Minister of Worship and Family Life at The Vine, says, *"My favorite part of the whole week*

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# God at *Work* in Lahaina, Maui

by Mark T. Hannemann

What do you say to someone who has lost everything? What do you say to someone who had to run to escape the hellish inferno only to face the reality that they have no place to call home because their home has been reduced to ashes? Welcome to Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii, a quaint, historic village on the west coast of Maui. At least that description was fitting up to just a few months ago, but now this village resembles many cities in Europe at the end of WWII.

What do you say? If you are wise, you choose your words very carefully. Maybe you do what Job's friends did at first. They sat in silence with him for the first seven days after his tremendous losses after tearing their garments and putting dust on their heads. You let the survivors tell their story, if they are up to it. You don't open your mouth, except maybe to say, "I am so sorry," or, "I'm here for you right now." You leave all the pious platitudes and cliches of grief at home. When you do say something, you definitely don't want to echo Job's three friends and say something

like, "Wow, you must have done something really bad for God to punish you in this way."

On August 15 I got a call from California/Nevada/Hawaii (CNH) District President Mike Lange asking if I could travel to Maui and be part of a relief team responding to the wildfires on the island. Our home base would be Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School in Kahului. Our team included Rev. Chris Singer and his wife Jeanette, Deaconess Kathy O'Day (Lutheran Church Charities), Rev. Rod Hall (a California pastor/counselor), and Rev. Ralph Schmidt (Orphan Grain Train). Our team assessed human care needs, provided care and support for the staff and members of Emmanuel, provided care and gift cards to survivors, made connections with other ministries and agencies, and developed a plan for ongoing efforts.

We had the joy and privilege of being able to participate in worship services at Emmanuel on August 20. Pastor Singer shared a message of hope based on the Gospel reading. It was the story of Jesus' gracious provision of

healing for the daughter of the Canaanite woman and His commendation of the woman's faith. The bottom line: Are we going to keep trusting Jesus when we experience loss, pain, suffering, and grief?

Most of my time was spent traveling to Lahaina each day and providing care and counseling to survivors who were being housed at area hotels. The hotel where I was serving had some 578 survivors. I was able to have conversations there with Lahaina residents who lost their homes or have not been able to return to their homes. Their stories were harrowing and heart-breaking. They were grateful to be alive and thankful for the help that was being provided. I heard degrees of frustration with the recovery process, anger borne out of being overwhelmed with the extreme circumstances, and observed decision-making paralysis consistent with early-stage grief.

I spent some time ministering to survivors who I found in the parking lots of the hotels in and around their vehicles and their few remaining earthly possessions. Many/most residents lost their vehicles in the fires. I spoke with a woman who was thankful to have gotten out of harm's way with her son, her dog, and her 90-year old mother. All that was left of her possessions was a suitcase she managed to grab when they evacuated that was full of travel items she had packed for a trip she and her son were going to take to see family in Japan, a trip they may never be able to take now. Our team was able to distribute gift cards to survivors in the name of Emmanuel, our whole LCMS family, and especially in the name of Jesus, the one who fills us with hope and comfort in the face of suffering.

One more story. I approached a woman who was walking her dog through the hotel. (The no pet policy had been suspended in this high-end resort facility.) She told me she lost her home and that family members had lost three dogs in the fire. I gave her a gift card and said it was from the church and she said, "Why did God let this happen? Why didn't God take me? Why would God take everything I have, but leave me here?" I told her I didn't know why, but suggested maybe a better question is "What"—what, God, do you have in mind for me? What, God, would you have me do now? I told her that the fire could take away all she had, but that the fire could not take away Jesus or her faith. She paused for a moment and then said, "I guess this is when Jesus is carrying me. You know, Footprints in the Sand." I said, "I think you're exactly right. Let Jesus carry you."

Prayer Requests: Please pray for all the families that have been impacted by the wildfires on Maui and for all the relief workers who have come from all over the country to help. Several other communities have been affected by the wildfires beyond Lahaina as well. Pray for Emmanuel Church and School; for Principal Josh Rempfer and the Emmanuel staff and members as they serve 217 students PS-8 and their families. Pray for Leif Sjostrand, president of the congregation, as he helps lead Emmanuel through these challenging days. Thanks for your prayers! ■

*Rev. Dr. Mark T. Hannemann is the Executive Director of Good Friend Ministries in Traverse City.*



Photo courtesy of Rev. Mark Hannemann



# Special Friends Ministry— *Giving People a Chance*

by Dennis Pieper

Special Friends Camp, a ministry to adults with intellectual disabilities, celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. Here are a couple stories which demonstrates the impact Special Friends Camp has on the participants—campers, if you will. It is my hope that sharing these stories will give people a glimpse into how our campers view themselves, each other, and the world around them.

Every year, on our last night of Special Friends Camp, we hold a dance. We all love it—campers and counselors alike. As one counselor says, *“You can dance silly and to your heart’s content and not be laughed at or feel foolish. In fact, sometimes they think you’re cool.”* That’s what our campers do as well, dancing as best as they can. This year at our Illinois Special Friends Camp we had a live band come to provide the music. It was great. For one camper it was especially uplifting. Katie (name changed) is weak in her left arm and leg but does her best to keep up with everyone else. Katie started moving to the music. Half step with her left leg, full step with the right, rock forward, pick up the left and put it back down, step back with the right, rock back and lift the left leg then back down. That was it, a simple rocking motion stepping and lifting as she could. It’s what happened next that I’ll never forget. A few people came on each side of Katie following

her motions. Then others joined in. The song came to an end, but the band leader noticed and asked, *“Hey, are you trying to do a line dance?”* We said yes, we call it “the Katie.” He called back, *“Well, try it with this”* and the band swung into *“Boot Scootin’ Boogie.”* We all made lines, followed Katie, turned left at the chorus, again and again. It became a real dance, and we loved it. Katie had the biggest smile the rest of the night.

You see, when given a chance, our friends can succeed in ways that will surprise you.

Such is the case for Kenny (name changed). Kenny was new to Special Friends Camp last year. At first his father was rather hesitant to even send him. You see, Kenny’s mom had passed away a few years before and since then, it was pretty much Kenny and his dad making their way through life day after day. Friends in their church encouraged Kenny’s father to try Special Friends Camp since it’s a Christ-centered camp and specifically



for people living with disabilities like Kenny's. There was hardly a day at camp when Kenny did not feel like part of the group and a longtime friend. After camp, Kenny talked about his friends and the things they did. So much so, that his dad started to see that Kenny was more capable than he gave him credit for. Every father wants his son to live their best life using all their potential skills and being as independent as possible. During the year, things changed for Kenny. He now lives in an apartment with some friends with similar abilities, and he is in job training and hopes to secure a job this fall.

Once again, when given a chance, our friends can succeed in ways that will surprise you. If you're lucky, they might even dance with you!

Before the pandemic, Special Friends Camp averaged around 40 campers per year. When the pandemic hit, we closed for the 2020 year. We came back in 2021 with 20 campers, in 2022 we had 25, and this year we hosted 29 campers. Special Friends Camp is slowly coming back to full strength. Many of our campers have multiple health concerns, some tied to their disability diagnosis and some due to personal health issues. Our goal is to, once again, serve 40 to 45 campers per year with 15 volunteer staff people. This would bring us to the maximum capacity.

Special Friends Ministries is looking to recruit volunteers and campers. Josh and Dennis Pieper are available to visit and present at your congregation if you are interested.

If you wish to support our ministry and help keep the cost down so more families may participate, there are ways to donate. For more information, visit [michigandistrict.org/specialfriendscamp](http://michigandistrict.org/specialfriendscamp). ■

*Dennis Pieper is the Director of Ministry Facilitators for Voice of Care. He currently assists with Special Friends Camp.*



# *Fear Not AI*



AI  
ETHICS

When we are confronted with the new capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as we read the headlines in the news, fear is understandable. Looking to the past is always a good way to deal with issues of today, according to Rev. Dr. A. Trevor Sutton: “We should have some degree of historical context. How have other technological advancements come onto the scene, transformed things, induced a lot of fear and then suddenly people continue on in a lot of ways and life goes on as usual?”

Dr. Sutton suggests that we should temper our fears when it comes to AI and its use in the church. He reminds us that we are already using AI on a daily basis. It might be a weaker form of AI like a Google search or a question to Alexa. “Maybe we should temper our fear with some other things,” said Rev. Dr. Sutton. “We should (try to) understand what is AI, what are its possibilities, what are the problems that come with it.”

## Problems

Deep fakes, voice cloning and other scams are created from AI and are used to harm many people, but Rev. Dr. Sutton shows us how looking to the past is helpful. “*The introduction of the printing press—that was anxiety inducing on the shortterm. Lots of people in the church, lots of people in society basically said that was the end of reading and literacy: ‘This is going to completely destroy the credibility of who wrote what. And it’s going to make it possible for plagiarism and falsification.’ And in some sense that stuff happened. But those immediate fears subsided, and then you look at how that fundamentally transformed communication, literacy, society, and the church—it was a big change, a massive change.*”

## Benefits

There are many benefits to AI. The most obvious is that it allows workers to be quick and efficient with tasks, giving them more time to focus on other important responsibilities. There are so many different tools that have become recently available and can be helpful to church workers, including:

- Chat GPT can help write text for newsletters and other copy, including job descriptions.
- Dall-e – text-to-image helps build logos and visuals.
- Video AI generation – text-to-video which can help with voiceovers for videos. Many tutorials use a form of this AI generation.
- Whisper or Google translate – A speech recognition model that can transcribe, identify, and translate multiple languages. This could be used and effective for multilingual or multiethnic congregations.

Like any content that is created, there needs to be someone who looks over and edits the content. Sutton encourages the church “*to not shy away from this in fear, but also not run headlong into it without thinking theologically or critically about it.*” ■

*This article was condensed from the Michigan District’s Thought Leader Podcast episode with guest Rev. Dr. Trevor Sutton, “Artificial Intelligence in the Church.” You can listen to it at [michigandistrict.org/podcast](http://michigandistrict.org/podcast).*

OCTOBER 2023

## Messiah - Midland: An example of an Acts 2 Church

When Pastor Ed Doerner was studying to be a youth minister in Chicago, he never would have predicted God would place him in Midland, Michigan. Instead, Doerner's place in the world would boil down to getting to know Jesus better.

"It all started when I gave a devotion, and one of the kids raised his hand when I was done. He asked me, 'Do you even believe in Jesus?' I told him, 'Yeah, of course, I do.' But I couldn't shake that conversation after going home that night. I remember opening my Bible and saying, 'Jesus, I don't think I really know you. Would you show yourself to me?' It has now become my lifelong, relentless pursuit to let one more person know who Jesus is."

Rev. Doerner has been the senior pastor at Messiah Lutheran in Midland since 2008. With an average weekly worship attendance of 350 members, the congregation is one of the largest in mid-Michigan. But it isn't their Sunday services that really set Messiah apart.

Under Elevate Community Ministries, a non-profit established by Messiah, they have developed nine external outreach programs over the past decade, ranging from appliance and auto repair to a discounted food center, The Bridge. In 2022, with the help of a CEF loan, Elevate purchased a former grocery store building that more than doubled the square footage available to The Bridge and allows for a wider range of options for the ministry. Each Elevate ministry serves individuals who are employed but might struggle to afford everyday expenses. "We're in the people business. All our external ministries are avenues we use to share Jesus with someone," says Doerner.

But there is also a personal bent to the daily ministry of Messiah for Pastor Doerner, as he has learned firsthand the impact of receiving help when you're afraid to ask. "When I first moved to Midland to serve at Messiah, it was catastrophic financially for my family. I had no money. We were deep in debt. I had two mortgages, one in Chicago and a new one in Michigan. We were underwater. We were so buried in debt, it was ridiculous. I have four kids. It wasn't going well for our family with this move. Then the transmission died on my van on my way to church.

"I walked into the church that day, and someone asked me if I was okay. I started to cry. I told him about my car. He immediately told me he would



*A CEF loan helped to buy a former grocery store which is the new home to The Bridge.*



*Pastor Ed Doerner talks with CEF's Andy Sohn about the many ways that they reach into their community.*

get my car to a shop to get fixed. But I couldn't pay for it. I didn't want anyone to do something for me, yet I needed help. God saw fit to show me a new model for ministry. People want a life they can afford, not just free handouts. I understand now what it feels like to be in financial trouble and not know where to turn. That's why I think our work is so crucial."



*His Hands Auto Care provides auto repairs at affordable prices - while demonstrating the Gospel in everyday situations.*

Thanks to financial partners like Church Extension Fund, Pastor Doerner now gets to guide the outreach at Messiah and Elevate. "The ministries we lead through Messiah allow me to go where pastors don't usually get to be," Doerner notes. "And CEF has always been supportive of the work we're doing in Midland. I can't wait to see what doors God will open for us next!"



Want to learn more about Messiah and Elevate Community Ministries?  
Visit: [mi-cef.org/news](http://mi-cef.org/news)



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# The Word Fells the Enemy

by Alex W. Hoffmeyer

*This devotion was inspired by the book 10 Questions to Ask Every Time You Read The Bible by Rev. Andrew Jones. His book provides helpful insights for anyone reading their Bible, whether new or experienced.*

*“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1).*

I’m betting that, at some point in your life, you’ve felt like the enemy is winning. Like sin, death, or the devil are ruling unchecked in the lives of so many and in our world, and it’s been going on for so long that you don’t really know how to react or how to respond. I bet you’ve felt compelled to speak out, to say something, but you haven’t known the words to say; or, if you have spoken, your cries have fallen on deaf ears. Maybe you’ve sought solace in your church, but then felt that bittersweet knowing just how many people you would like to see in worship with you. More and more, we see our enemy’s strength, and it seems too powerful for our liking.

I think this is the reason why we like to identify individuals as enemies. It makes the enemy seem less powerful and more manageable. It is far easier to think of how we can combat a politician’s policies or speak against the actions of our fellow community members than it is to imagine how we would fare in a wrestling match with our own sin—or, God forbid, the devil. But that only makes the problem worse. If we identify an individual who we believe is acting as our enemy, and if we happen to succeed in “defeating” them, another will inevitably rise up. And if our goal is to do battle with them and whoever comes after, we will find ourselves losing—because we are incapable of winning.

## Two Related Questions

If we ask ourselves, “who is my enemy?” we may identify individuals at first, but eventually Scripture

would lead us to the unholy trinity of sin, death, and the devil. Knowing this, our next question is naturally: “How are these enemies defeated?” To answer this question, we must first take ourselves out of the picture. Rev. Jones reminds us in his book, “*We do not ask [these questions] in order to act independently and win glory for ourselves by defeating enemies all on our own*” (Jones, Andrew. *10 Questions to Ask Every Time You Read the Bible*, 33). Even if that were possible, it would only serve to puff us up and turn us away from the true answer to our question. We must know that we cannot defeat this enemy—not by our own power. The answer to this question in Scripture doesn’t point to us. It points outside of us, to a Savior named Jesus, who was sent for us that we might humbly receive the victory He has won.

Asking “How is the enemy defeated?” is a highly comforting question, for it reveals many truths when we ask it of our Scripture readings. When we look in our Bibles, we see our true enemies—the devil, sin, and death—being defeated by our Lord in heaven. Our Lord Jesus defeats the devil by resisting temptation in the desert on our behalf and by enduring the assaults of the devil on the cross; He vanquishes sin by offering forgiveness, which He can give to us because of His sacrifice for sins on the cross; and He utterly destroys death by rising from the dead and stepping out of the tomb, showing us that one day we and all the saints

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“In the world you will have tribulation. But *take heart*; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

## Putting Money into Its Place

by Laura L. Thomas

The subject of money and what we should or shouldn't do with it can be contentious. We all have opinions that have been shaped by our families, our peers, our workplaces, the media, and our government. In the United States, we are given more latitude to choose our financial priorities than many other countries. And what does our currency say? "In God We Trust."

As people of God, we know that He owns and gifts to us all that we have. He tells us that He knows our needs even before we ask. Knowing this world's sinful obsession with money, God has given us good instruction on how to receive and spend this gift in a God-pleasing way.

The Bible is full of good advice. It isn't *money* that God warns us about, it's the *love of money*. Jesus said that we can't serve two masters—it's either God or money. In Matthew's account of the parable of the talents, the servants who wisely invested the master's money were rewarded.

The Bible also recognizes earthly riches with the examples of Solomon, Job, and David, and earthly poverty with the examples of the widow giving her mite; Lazarus, who died while sitting at the rich man's gate;

and Ruth, who relied on Boaz' kindness for her daily food. The distinction between the "haves" and the "have nots" has not changed from the time the Bible was written until now.

The common thread is recognition, thankfulness, and response to all of God's gifts. Whether rich or poor, whether lifted up or humbled, God calls us to see ourselves and others as stewards of every gift from Him. The sharing of any gift is a matter of the heart first. It is a thankful acknowledgement and response to His undeserved goodness to us. He promises that He will "pour down for you a blessing" (Malachi 3:10) and "supply" and "multiply" (2 Corinthians 9:10) what He has given to you to share. We can joyfully respond to this!

In the Michigan District, we are People of Hope. Whether you are part of a congregation that has many or few members, God has given you a place, a time, and a measure of His blessings to share with your community. Money is one of many gifts. As we work together to bring the Light of the Gospel to our neighbors, your district staff is here to help you discover and give back to God all that He has given to you.

*Mrs. Laura L. Thomas is the Director of Development for the Michigan District, LCMS.*



### Sharing the Gospel with Youth

Sharing the Gospel with youth has long been a major strength of the Lutheran Hour Ministry (LHM) center in Uruguay. One of its many youth activities, a popular after-school program, resumed in May 2022 following a hiatus due to the pandemic.

Each Monday evening from May through December, up to fourteen children visited the ministry center to complete homework while working one-on-one with a high school student volunteer from San Pablo School. The weekly interactions also allowed the volunteers to work through some of the children's doubts and difficulties while using support materials put together by LHM—Uruguay staff, who created grammar, math, and reading exercises from Christian books.

Prior to the start of the classes last spring, the volunteers participated in a training workshop led by San Pablo's Christian education teacher. Despite attending the school, many of these volunteers are not Christian. The workshop taught them different study techniques for children, the importance of service to others through volunteering, and how to surrender with love while assisting the students in their studies.

At the end of each session, the school's Christian

education teacher shared a small reflection using the book *A Garden of Bible Stories*, which focuses on Christian values and the example of Jesus Christ. Many program participants had never heard about Jesus and this program allowed staff to regularly share the Good News with them.

*"We love offering these weekly activities, trusting that the Lord is the One who guides us to provide this service of love to both the participants and volunteers and bring them closer to His Word,"* says the director of LHM—Uruguay.

Aitana and her mother have participated in several LHM—Uruguay activities over the past few years. While Aitana's mother stopped going to church many years ago, she recognizes that her daughter's participation in LHM's activities is the only space where she hears about the love of God and learns about Jesus Christ.

Aitana is grateful for the weekly interactions through this program. *"I thank you for those days that I came with homework or some activity so that someone could help me,"* she says. *"I appreciate you very much for the wonderful time I have spent with you and the friends I have made."*

To learn more or to support LHM, go to [lhm.org](http://lhm.org).



### Deaf Runners: Caring for Body and Soul

The Crim is an annual race/fundraising event in Flint that supports the health of children and families. This past August there was a Deaf section who walked or ran in the Crim.

Represented among these aspiring athletes and health enthusiasts were members of the *Healthy You Me* (HYM) group that meets every Tuesday at St. Paul, Flint. HYM is a partnership between St. Paul and the Communication Access Center, an advocacy agency that supports the Flint Deaf community with interpreters and related services. *Healthy You Me* recognizes that God has made Deaf people both physical and spiritual creatures who need to be cared for spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Deaf people join weekly meetings consisting of dinner and a presentation by Rev. Thomas Dunseth followed by discussion. The weekly presentations are interactive and based on one of the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 steps, with Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* as a foundation. Sometimes there are presentations about nutrition and exercise.

*Healthy You Me* is a faith-based outreach program to

### Lutheran Gathering Following Michigan March For Life

The Michigan March for Life will take place on Wednesday, November 8. This event will begin with a rally at the State Capitol in Lansing at 11 a.m. and run to approximately 1 p.m.

You are encouraged to attend this *March For Life* with your family, friends, and fellow congregation members. Even if you have a physical limitation or disability that would make it difficult to do the march (*which will only be a few blocks*), you can still attend the rally itself at the Capitol.

Besides strongly encouraging your presence at the *Rally and March For Life* in Lansing, we invite you and the members of your congregations to a **FOLLOW-UP LUTHERAN GATHERING** for our own LCMS people who are coming to the March. This gathering will be held at **Hope Lutheran Church in DeWitt** following the Rally and March at the Capitol. We are very thankful to the congregation of Hope Lutheran for doing this. This will enable us to rest a bit after the March and have some light refreshments provided by Lutherans For Life of Michigan. We are very pleased to announce that we have a special speaker for the event as well: Pastor Michael Salemink, the Executive Director of National Lutherans For Life. There may be other speakers as well.

Please join us on November 8! For more information, visit [marchforlife.org/michigan-march-for-life](http://marchforlife.org/michigan-march-for-life). For more information regarding Michigan Lutherans For Life, visit [lflmi.org](http://lflmi.org).



Photo courtesy of Rev. Thomas Dunseth

a marginalized community that has no access to such services in its own language. HYM is the first of its kind in Michigan. It has come into existence with the Lord's blessing and is currently looking at opening a second location for Deaf people in northern Genesee County.

To learn more about *Healthy You Me*, contact Rev. Dunseth at [twdunseth@gmail.com](mailto:twdunseth@gmail.com).

Did you know that the Michigan District has other Deaf Ministry resources available on its website? To access them, visit [michigandistrict.org/deafministry](http://michigandistrict.org/deafministry).

### Oktoberfest in Cadillac

Emmanuel, Cadillac presents *Oktoberfest* on October 13. The menu consists of homemade sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, pulled pork, brats, hotdogs, hot German potato salad, and more. Take-out is available. A silent auction, hayrides, crafts, a cider press, and facepainting round out the family fun. Entertainment will feature local musicians and the Northern Lights Irish Dance Academy. Cost is \$35 (family), \$12 (adults), \$5 (children ages 4-12). Children 3 and under are free. All proceeds will benefit Love Inc of Wexford and Osceola Counties.

## Special Recognition

### Meet the Michigan District's Commissioned Ministry Advocate

DCE Luke Esselman has served at Grace, Coopersville, since graduating from Concordia Chicago in 2010. Raised in Lutheran Education his entire life, he has been surrounded by incredible LCMS educators and church workers that have blessed him and given him a heart to serve and help the Church at large.

Esselman lives in Coopersville with his wife, Amanda, and their kids Jackson and Willow. Their married daughter Hannah lives in Grand Rapids with her husband, Tim. They enjoy much that West Michigan has to offer, including the beach, hiking, and you-pick fruits of all kinds.

Esselman joins the District staff having also served for 9 years on the Camp Concordia Board of Directors (including a couple years as president), 14 years on the Michigan District Jr. High Gathering committee (the past 7 years as chairman), and many years as part of the West Michigan DCE/DFLM cluster.

Along with his continued ministry at Grace, he will be working part-time for the District, reporting to Superintendent of Schools Travis Grulke. The role of the Commissioned Ministry Advocate is to support the congregations and workers in the Michigan District by networking with and advocating for commissioned ministers (non-teacher). His duties will include:

- Working as the liaison between the Michigan District and the Synod Office for commissioned ministers (non-teacher).
- Building relationships and providing leadership for the commissioned ministers (non-teacher).

- Nurturing and helping develop the cluster meetings of commissioned ministers (non-teacher).
- Providing current and appropriate resources to commissioned ministers (non-teacher).
- Supporting the efforts in planning annual conferences for commissioned ministers (non-teacher).
- Working with the Superintendent of Schools to assist with any significant issues pertaining to all commissioned ministers.

Grulke says, *"We are excited to have Luke serving in the role of Commissioned Ministry Advocate. He will be encouraging, supporting, and walking alongside the gifted group of DCEs, FLMS, deaconesses, parish music leaders, and the many other professional church workers serving in our congregations here in our Michigan District. We look forward to seeing how the Good Lord uses Luke to be a blessing!"*

Esselman looks forward to being used by the Lord in this new role of Commissioned Ministry Advocate, to work WITH and FOR the Commissioned ministers and congregations of the Michigan District. To HIS glory, always.



A banner for the 2023 Professional Church Workers Conference. The background is a colorful, abstract painting with shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue. In the top left corner, there is a white logo of a cross with a dove above it. To the right of the logo, the text reads: "Michigan District, LCMS presents" in white, "2023 Professional Church Workers Conference" in large white font, "November 19-21, 2023 | Grand Rapids, Mich." in smaller white font, and "michigandistrict.org/pcw23" in white. At the bottom, the word "ABID" is written in large, dark blue, block letters, with "In Jesus" written in white cursive script over it. In the bottom right corner, the text "John 15:4-5" is written in white.

## 2023 Urban Summer Camp/VBS continued from page 3

was watching our youngest 6th grade leaders transition from participating to helping put on this outreach program.”

**St. Paul Community, Pontiac’s** VBS took place July 24–28. They had 78 participants—an increase of 18 from last year. The youth (teenage) VBS program that goes and serves the community was maxed out again. They had a lot of fun. Rev. Chris Jung and the VBS Director wrote their own VBS curriculum this year to focus the activities and



Photo courtesy of St. Paul, Pontiac

lessons more squarely on Jesus and His mission on earth. The theme was “Walking with Jesus.” Every day, the students literally walked to a different location on campus to do a mini pilgrimage. There they not only heard the story of Jesus, but they were able to see it, touch it,



Photo courtesy of The Vine, Walker

and experience it. They walked to

Bethlehem, the temple, the River Jordan, the cross, and the empty tomb.

Rev. Jung’s favorite story from the week is as follows: *“On day four, walking to the cross, we discussed how we all do things that do not please God. These things are bad and are called ‘sins.’ We ‘confess’ our sins to God, telling God what we did and that we are sorry for them. So we all came up to the altar (the cross is above) and we confessed our sins. Then I went around and gave them all absolution. On the fifth day, we were recapping all of the themes from the week, and we had a new student. When we got*

*to confessing our sins, the new student expressed that he wanted to do it. All of the students unanimously wanted to do it again, because they said that they had sinned since the day before, and they wanted to be forgiven by God. It made me tear up a bit to hear how eager they were to talk to God, confess their sins, and receive forgiveness.”*

**Pan de Vida, St. Stephen, and Family of God, Detroit** combined efforts and volunteers to offer a bilingual (Spanish/English) VBS on the week of August 7–10. Pastor Ricardo Granado led the Spanish part of the program, and Pastors Nicolas Gapski, Tyler Cronkright, and Jim Hill took turns with the English part. They had a total of 15 children attending (starting with 9 and increasing as the week went by), most of whom were Hispanic. On the last day, parents were invited to the closing worship service, which was led in both English and Spanish and followed by an ice cream social and raffle for prizes for the children. Four Hispanic children were attending VBS for the first time, and two of them came back on Sunday with their mother.

### Thank You

These summer programs were made possible by many donors’ generous responses to our Spring Appeal, as well as by many volunteers who gave their time and talent. Thank you! If you would like to support future summer camp/VBS programs like these, you can: 1) Pray; 2) Volunteer; or 3) Donate. For more information, visit [michigandistrict.org/a2e](http://michigandistrict.org/a2e). ■

*Elisa L. Schulz is a staff writer, copy editor, and photographer for the Michigan District, LCMS.*



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

## The Word Fells the Enemy

will rise from our resting places to walk with Him for all eternity. When we ask “How is this enemy defeated,” the answer is we look to the cross of Christ and the empty tomb to show us God for who He is. He is the one who defeats the enemies. He is the one who fights against the devil’s lies with His truth. He is the one who forgives sins. He is the one who overcomes death and the grave. Praise be to God!

continued from page 12



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I’m betting some of you feel right now that the enemy is making strong advances in our world. Our Lord says to your anxious heart, “*In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). In that confidence, we may sing a familiar hymn in praise to our Lord: “*With might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected; But for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected. Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord, and there’s none other God; He holds the field forever*” (LSB 656:2). ■

*Rev. Alex W. Hoffmeyer serves Salem Lutheran Church in Coloma, Mich.*

## The Answer

When we look to God, we also see who we are in relationship to Him. And this in turn provides a present peace and comfort to all who worry about the “advances” of the enemy in our world. The enemies of this world are strong, and they are frightening at times. Our first instinct is to take up arms that we might defeat them. But that is not who we are. We do not defeat the enemies—God defeats them. And although He may choose to use and empower people to fight against these enemies, it is not by their power or for their glory. It is for God’s own glory. He alone deserves the credit for the victory over sin, death, and Satan. And so, when we feel the weight of these enemies, we should turn our lives and our hearts to Him.

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- Chip May,  
Executive Director at Camp Arcadia



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# Calls and Roster Update

## ORDAINED

### Calls Accepted

Rev. Gerald Gauthier, II (Wabash, IN) to St. John, Bay City, MI  
Rev. Michael J. Grannis (Bellville, MI) to St. Paul, Waseca, MN  
Rev. James O. Murr, Jr. (Pingree Grove, IL) to Immanuel, St. Clair

### Change of Status

Rev. Frederick T. Cordts (AuGres, MI) to Emeritus  
Rev. Dr. Mark J. Hill (Grand Blanc, MI) to Emeritus  
Rev. Henry G. Pahlkotter, SMP (Saginaw, MI) to Candidate

### Transferred Into District

Rev. Douglas J. Bender (Clinton Twp., MI) from South Wisconsin District  
Rev. Gerald Gauthier, II (Wabash, IN) from Indiana District

### Transferred Out

Rev. Michael J. Grannis (Bellville, MI) to Minnesota South District  
Rev. Henry G. Pahlkotter, SMP (Saginaw, MI) to Iowa District East

### Called Home

Rev. Rodney L. Morrison

## COMMISSIONED

### Calls Accepted

Bulgrien, Rachel (Concordia, Fort Wayne, IN) to Zion, Harbor Beach  
Glumm, Julie (Zion, Bay City) to Bethlehem, Saginaw  
Godbold, Ellen (Candidate) to ISJ Academy, Grand Rapids  
Krueger, Brendan (Concordia, River Forest, IL) to Bethlehem, Saginaw  
Polk, Norma (Candidate) to University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor  
Preuss, Micah (Candidate) to Christ Our Savior Lutheran High School, Evansville, IL  
Ressler, Amanda (St. Paul, Trenton) to St. Trinity, Clarkston  
Schaeff, Natalie (Cq. Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Peace, Saginaw

### Change of Status

Auxter, Annalyse (St. Paul, Northville) to Candidate  
Davis, Leanne (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Emeritus  
Drinane, Nicole (St. Matthew, Westland) to Candidate  
Ferguson, Rose (St. Mark, Flint) to Candidate  
Hohnstadt, Kyra (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Candidate  
King, Carole (St. Luke, Clinton Township) to Candidate  
Siemen, Rachel (Michigan District, LCMS) to Candidate  
Streeter, Amber (ISJ Academy, Grand Rapids) to Candidate

### Transferred Out of District

Siebarth, Pamela (Emeritus) to Rocky Mountain District

### Transferred Into of District

Kiehl, Peter (Florida-Georgia District) to Trinity, Utica  
Rinkinen, Jenna (South Wisconsin District) to Trinity, Traverse City

### Called Home

Jones, Karen  
Kell, Delmar

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)

## OCTOBER 2023

- 6 New Teacher Orientation  
St. Luke, Ann Arbor
- 8 State Cross Country Meet  
Concordia University 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
- 22–24 DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

## DECEMBER 2023

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

## JANUARY 2024

- 1 New Year's Day  
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 15 Board of Directors Listening Event West  
Location TBD
- 21–27 National Lutheran Schools Week

