

May 2024

# michigan

## IN TOUCH

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



### GREAT COMMISSION

## Except for This

by Rev. David A. Davis

Life is daunting. M.S. Peck famously began his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, with this line: “Life is difficult.” You will find the same theme in Psalm 73. You will find the same reality almost daily at the kitchen table, or in the news, or at the doctor’s office or when the kids get home from school. It can all become too much.

Except for this: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

Our life together as Church and within our congregations has its challenges. We have witnessed decline. We struggle getting enough

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## michigan

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“Christ has  
indeed been raised  
from the dead.”

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volunteers and full-time church workers. The culture of the land intrudes and disrupts. We tend to major on minors and minimize the call to love God above all things and our neighbors as ourselves. We meet bureaucracy at every turn where we expect to find collaboration. There are indications that the Church’s “best days” are behind her.

Except for this: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

Have you said prayers that have seemed to have gone unanswered? Are there things that you experience in the world that don’t add up with the Word? Are there things you read in the Word that don’t add up with the world? Does your confidence in Jesus wane as secularism continues to rise? Do you expect to see more of God’s power at work than what you see? Maybe it is time to give up on it all?

Except for this: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

As we continue to bask in the victory over sin, death, and the devil made certain by both the death and the resurrection of Jesus, let us approach each day with boldness, confidence, joy, and love. Certainly, we live in a broken world with its brokenness poking into all areas of our lives. At the same time, we live in an eternal Kingdom with a resurrected King reigning at the right hand of the Father. He continues to build that Kingdom, having assured us that nothing can withstand its advance.

We make an important distinction in our circles about a “theology of the cross” and a “theology of glory.” With the Easter Season soon giving way to Pentecost, let’s consider a “theology of the Gospel.” Through Jesus’ incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, a good Kingdom has drawn near. By the proclamation of the Gospel, it inexorably breaks out around the world drawing people from every tribe and nation into it. (See Luther’s Explanation to The Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.) It is a Kingdom that is ours by faith; powerful and victorious even if experienced in a certain hiddenness.

So onward, people of God.

At times all might seem to be lost and left behind and the world victorious. And outward experiences might lead us to believe that is true.

Except for this: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. ■



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



Photos courtesy of Lutheran Braille Workers

# Connections Through Braille

by Rachel Potts

“*I want people to learn about Jesus even if they can’t see,*” said a preschool student at St. John’s Lutheran School in Rochester, Mich., as he pushed a sheet of paper through a Braille press.

Surrounded by his peers in a bustling room in St. John’s basement, this student and over 300 hundred others spent Thursday of National Lutheran Schools Week in January learning about and making Christian materials in Braille and Specialized Large Print with staff members from Lutheran Braille Workers.

There are 338 million people throughout the world who are blind or visually impaired. Lutheran Braille Workers, an organization based in California, brings the Word of God in Braille and Specialized Large Print to these people, completely free of charge. LBW partnered with St. John, Rochester for a day-long servant event focused on producing Christian materials and raising awareness of visual impairment.

“*I didn’t know that Braille is really words you touch,*” commented a third grader. Students from preschool to eighth grade colored, printed, typed, or pressed Braille sheets and books and visited stations with a variety of fun activities. Younger students made Braille words with tennis balls and stickers, used slates and styluses to hand punch Braille, and typed on Perkins Braille. Older students set and pressed the LWML’s devotional

book *The Mustard Seed*, and assembled Specialized Large Print sermons and books. All of the students wrote thank you notes to the hundreds of volunteers at LBW’s Ministry Production Centers throughout the country, where most of the Braille and Large Print materials are made. Students of all ages also “Snacked in the Dark,” an experience in which they were blindfolded and ate without seeing their food. “*Not seeing my snack was hard but I kind of get what that must be like,*” said one student.

By the end of the day, the students had completed 190

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# Military Chaplains—*a Ministry of Presence*

by Christopher R. Bodley

In 2003, which was the year of the War in Iraq, I served as the Battalion Chaplain for the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion located in Camp Pendleton, Calif. The general of our division chose our battalion for a special role in Operation Iraqi Freedom. We were given the mission to be the diversionary force for the rest of the division as they moved to Baghdad. The task for this group of 300 Marines was to move from Kuwait to Baghdad through Iraqi towns giving the impression that other American troops were coming that way. Without additional weaponized support, we were to get the Iraqi Army to send their troops to battle us while the rest of the division moved expeditiously to Baghdad.

One of our earliest military encounters took place in a town called An-Nasiriyah. As we approached the town, we could hear AK 47's and mortars. We were directed off the highway down into an area off the bridge where we would be positioned for battle. In the midst of our battle formation, my bodyguard and I were placed in the triage area with Navy corpsmen who would provide medical care for the wounded or dying. There were 4

stations in the triage area. We were placed in station 4, where Marines who could not recover from their injuries would be placed.

Our position was close to two other companies prepared for battle—approximately 50 yards away. In about 15 minutes you could see muzzle flashes coming from our 9:00 position (left). The Marines responded to this attack. Within another 5 minutes, enemy troops had moved to our 12:00 position (front) to pinch us in. While my bodyguard and I were watching the exchange, one of the senior enlisted men had ducked, walked his way to us, and said, “Chaplain, it’s about to get real tight in here; you all need to start digging trenches.” So my bodyguard and I began digging a trench for ourselves lying on our sides as gunfire was taking place. We could hear the Marines shouting, “They’re trying to outflank us.” As I looked up to see what was happening, I saw these Marines shift seamlessly in the middle of the battlefield from the left to the right to counter the attack. As we were still digging our trench, we heard another battle status which made the hairs on my neck rise.

Someone shouted, “*There is a tank coming up on our 3:00 o’clock!*” Why was this serious? This was serious because our battalion was made up of only Humvees, and some of them didn’t have doors. As I’m looking at all of this I’m praying, “*Lord, hold the line.*”

The commotion from the battle was immense. We dug feverishly to get depth for our trenches. In the midst of my digging, my bodyguard began tapping me on my shoulder and I shouted, “*What?*” I looked into his eyes and he said, “*Look.*” I turned my head and saw what looked like the attack helicopter, the SuperCobra, descend near our location and send out a missile which took out the tank. You could hear the companies release loud shouts of “*Yea, get some!*” In an instant, the attack was repelled and enemy troops began to withdraw. We were instructed to gather our gear and get back into the transport trucks and head into the town.

When we entered the town, this is where we saw the carnage. Our battalion responded by looking to help Iraqi citizens who had been forced into buses and fired upon by hostile forces. A day later, after we had a chance to provide medical support, we moved out.

Several days later we were in another location after driving in a convoy. As the sun was setting, the companies posted security. At one of the checkpoints there were eight Marines. A car approached their location. One of the challenges of being in Iraq was that the Marines did not speak Arabic or Farsi. They were waving off the driver as to say, “*Go another direction.*” The driver continued advancing. The Marines continued using physical motions indicating that the driver should stop. He didn’t comply. As he sped toward them, the Marines shot with their M-16’s because this was perceived as a hostile attack. The vehicle slowly came to a halt.

As the passengers exited, a couple of men staggered out of the car. A third man came out. In his arms he was carrying a little girl. The girl, we learned a little later, was his daughter. She succumbed to her wound. Needless to say, even though these were Marines, they were devastated.

Hours later, after I had talked with the commanding officer, I went to meet with the two groups of Marines who had been affected by this event. Part of my responsibility

in situations like this was to provide Critical Incident Stress Debriefing sessions. It was during this CISD that I had the opportunity to listen and to walk through what had transpired with the Marines. During that session I was also able to listen and learn from them about their mission and responsibility to each other. It was during that time that I was able to offer grace, support, and understanding, as each had to wrestle within themselves the ramifications of their actions, the mission, and the loss.

These are a couple of moments which God allows for us chaplains to live out a “ministry of presence” and to be proclaimers of hope and grace in complicated scenarios which war brings. It was an honor to serve with and among the Marines engaged in their global mission as I lived out the *Missio Dei* in my life. ■

*Rev. Christopher R. Bodley is Missionary-at-large in Detroit for A2E for the Michigan District, LCMS and pastor of Bethany, Detroit.*

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*We thank God for all military chaplains and all those who have served or still serve our country. This Memorial Day weekend, we especially remember those who have given their lives in the armed forces. The LCMS Operation Barnabas is a network of care to our nation’s military members, veterans, and families. To find out how they can assist your congregation in reaching out to veterans and their families in your community, visit [lcms.org/ministry-to-the-armed-forces/operation-barnabas](http://lcms.org/ministry-to-the-armed-forces/operation-barnabas).*



© jakobowens/unsplash

Photo courtesy of Jewel Richardson

# Bend or Break

by Jewel Richardson

Storms come. It's a fact. They come with the weather. They also come to us individually, to our families, and to our communities. They take many forms: a diagnosis of stage 4 cancer or Alzheimer's, death of a family member, or a house fire. The fires in Maui and California have devastated whole communities. Did they bend or break?

We think of the Church as the constant, stabilizing factor in these storms of life. But what happens when the Church experiences a storm? Maybe the longtime pastor retires or accepts a call elsewhere... It's enough to shake a congregation to the core. But what about the congregation whose pastor has a heart attack or accident requiring a lengthy recovery? How about watching the pastor slip into dementia? What happens then? Do they bend or break?

Any of these events is enough to break a person or congregation. Many of us have seen it happen. But we have also seen where they have bent under the load but not broken. Some call them strong-willed. But are they really? What gives them the strength to continue and come back with a stronger faith than before? In trees, it is the long inner cells which form fibers that run the length of the tree. Fibers which stick together and are hard to separate. Think about splitting freshly cut oak—that's what a 5-ton splitter is for!

The fibers that make up an individual's spiritual and emotional life are faith in God and help from family and friends. Faith in God is strengthened by immersion in His Word, singing or listening to hymns, and worshiping and partaking of Holy Communion with others. The storms of life wear one down physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The load can be very heavy. Will they bend or break?

As fellow believers, we can share "*one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2). It's nice to say we are praying for someone; but, when possible, we need to put hands and feet to our prayers by offering food, transportation, running errands, or respite care. Remember: people may not ask for help although it is desperately needed.

Scriptures we often rely on are Psalm 23 and John 10. But what about handwriting one of your favorite verses in a card? Maybe you are not into sending cards. What about sending a text with a verse—not just the reference but the whole verse? One of my favorite verses is Deuteronomy 31:6: "*Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.*" Depending upon the translation you use, this verse has a different promise for every day of the week. What other verses of promise do you know? They will help someone bend and not break.

Corrie Ten Boom, who survived a Nazi concentration camp, bent rather than broke. She said, "***Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.***" ■

*Jewel Richardson is a Ministry Assistant at Beautiful Savior, Wellston.*

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*This article was originally posted in The Deacon's Beacon newsletter, February issue.*

*For more information about the Ministry Assistant Program and other ways of becoming a lay leader through the Michigan School of Missional Formation, visit [michigandistrict.org/missional](http://michigandistrict.org/missional).*

# Camp Lu Lay Lea, *Uplifting and Unforgettable*



From the moment you step foot onto the campgrounds, there's an energy like no other. This has been true for decades. From campers and staff members to volunteers and board members, so many have this same experience. Camp Lu Lay Lea is where lifelong friendships are made, where a connection with God grows stronger and love for a place turns into a lifetime of favorite memories.

Camp Lu Lay Lea is nestled in a private wooded area of Michigan near West Branch. Far enough away to feel secluded from the everyday hustle and bustle, yet close enough for families to comfortably drive for an afternoon to drop off and pick up their children. The 75-year-old camp brings with it rustic buildings filled with remnants of years past that all who visit love to touch and see. The basic cabins that house boys and girls age 8 to 14 years old have wooden bunk beds that campers can't wait to fill with sleeping bags and have conversations about the evening's skit at campfire or which is their favorite chapel song. The Camp, licensed by the State of Michigan, recently earned RSO status and is managed by several well-trained and compassionate staff. Many of the staff are previous campers who will never really grow out of being at Camp and come back year after year. It is their goal to instill the same love they have for Camp into the next generation, all while providing a

loving and safe environment.

Each day, campers explore nature and the outdoors around them by participating in arts and crafts, faith-based programs, and group games with friendly competition. They also enjoy swimming and boating on beautiful Henderson Lake. Devotions and daily chapel services, filled with song and praise and the Word of God, give campers a chance to learn more about the Gospel and the importance of growing their faith.

Evenings are filled with group games and activities that provide campers with a feeling of belonging. Other nights, the smell of campfire fills the air while everyone gathers 'round to sing and dance to Christian-based songs and laugh at the silly skits performed by staff and their camper peers. The week offers plenty of time for campers to connect with one another, creating bonds that grow year after year.

Camp Lu Lay Lea offers five week-long sessions running from June 23, 2024 to August 3, 2024. Sessions begin each Sunday afternoon and run through Saturday morning, and include all weekly accommodations, activities, and delicious and nutritious meals. Give your child the opportunity to experience Camp Lu Lay Lea. Visit [CampLuLayLea.org](http://CampLuLayLea.org) for more information and to register. ■

MAY 2024

## MI-Reason for Borrowing from CEF

Rev. Jonathan Meyer recently accepted the call to St. Matthew-Grand Rapids. He chose to secure a housing loan with CEF so that he and his family could move from Oklahoma to Grand Rapids to continue his calling in serving the Lord.

Lutheran Church and School in Edmond, Oklahoma. And as the Lord would have it, his first call was as Assistant Pastor to that same congregation. Jonathan served in that capacity for five years and was humbled when the congregation called him as Senior Pastor in 2019.

Emma and Jonathan saw the congregation and school grow and the Holy Spirit do amazing things. They were making disciples right where they were. Jonathan recalls that he and Emma never imagined how their family of 5 (plus two dogs!) would ever leave—and certainly not to any cold state up north!

### ***Heeding the Call***

In September of 2023, Jonathan received the call to serve at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids. He says, “It would have been easy to dismiss it—after all, we were happy and comfortable where we were. But we had to take our feelings out of the equation, confident that this call is from God and therefore He would bless the work regardless of location.”

Through much prayer and deliberation, as well as seeking advice from a dozen or more pastors and church workers, Jonathan and his family decided to accept the call to St. Matthew, to join in the mission of “connecting a restless world to the restoring way of Jesus.”



Rev. Jonathan Meyer and wife, Emma and their three children

### ***Path to the Ministry***

Jonathan is a 2007 graduate of Concordia University Chicago, where he was involved in the Pre-Seminary program. In 2010, at the prompting of his future wife,

Emma, he enrolled at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Emma and Jonathan got married right before classes began!

In 2012 - 2013, Jonathan’s vicarage assignment was Holy Trinity





*St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids*

### **Generous Resources**

At the time the call came from St. Matthew, CEF's Andy Sohn told Jonathan (his college classmate!) that the MI-Home Welcome Rate program at CEF was about to be unveiled. Jonathan admits that he doesn't speak much financial lingo, so knowing there were such generous resources available through CEF certainly factored into his decision. He and his family could confidently make the move with the assurance that there was an institution working for church workers which relieved much of the mental burden that such financial decisions place upon individuals and couples.

### **In the Market**

When the Meyers began looking at houses on the market, it was "slim

pickin's" to say the least. Often, when they went to look at a house, it was quickly snatched up before they could make an offer. They knew that if they were going to make a move on any house, that they would have to move very quickly. This made Jonathan and Emma nervous as their home in Oklahoma was still on the market.

This is where CEF's below market interest rates ended up being a tremendous help, allowing the Meyers to secure a loan which let them make a solid offer. Jonathan said, "When we found the house we could call 'home,' CEF made it all possible."

### **Working with CEF**

He states, "Everyone we have spoken with or corresponded with has been very responsive and

helpful. Our experience has been extremely pleasant. Again, I don't speak financial lingo, but CEF made it simple and answered all our questions."

Jonathan also recommends that churches partner with CEF on the church worker housing program as "synod" means "walking together" and partnering with CEF is a fantastic way to do just that. He believes that St. Matthew's partnership with CEF helps him focus on fulfilling his vocation as husband and father, and as a pastor to his congregation. CEF allows Jonathan to lead the mission forward, confident that financial matters are well taken care of.



Want to learn more about the MI-Home Welcome Rate?  
Call 800-242-3944



Church Extension Fund

3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-3098

[www.mi-cef.org](http://www.mi-cef.org) ■ Offices: 800-242-3944

## LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

### Resources for Community Outreach

Spring has sprung and, before you know it, summer will be here. One LLL member has been gearing up to prepare for his annual block party. In his city, they allow him to shut off his street. He offers free food, a free raffle with fun giveaways, and live music, but the one thing he looks forward to is having the neighborhood kids all come together. Since he's a Thrivent member, he utilizes their action grant to purchase a variety of LHM's children's booklets to give away in little goodie bags during the party. The kids are always excited to have a gift to take home, and the best part is, they are taking away with them the message of Jesus' love.

Another Thrivent member and LHM Ambassador, Susan Burgdorf, has started a Little Free Library on her church property. She and other church members stock the library with LHM booklets and other Christian resources. The area gets a lot of foot traffic, and it is a really neat way to connect with their community. They also use Thrivent as a way to help them fund this ministry. They utilize action grants and Thrivent Choice Dollars® as well as individual donations.

Are you a Thrivent member? If you are or someone in

your congregation is, remember that, if you're having an event, a fundraiser, or a service project, you can apply for a Thrivent action grant and receive up to \$250 in seed money! It's a great way to share LHM resources with those in your community. You can purchase your LHM resources at [shoplhm.org](http://shoplhm.org).



LUTHERAN HOUR  
MINISTRIES

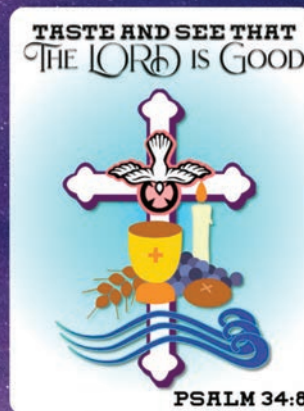
[www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org)

## LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

REGISTRATION

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LWML MICHIGAN  
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<https://lwmlmichigan.org/convention/district>

JUNE 28-30, 2024





# Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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

## 2024 Spring Appeal

“Sowing of seeds” is a good analogy for the way we see our work with youth in the Michigan District. It is vitally important that we grow our children’s faith in the good soil of God’s Word and water them with Christian worship and fellowship. As they grow, we “fertilize” them with opportunities for learning and service in the Church.

The District’s Education Office serves 131 early childhood centers, 68 elementary schools and 5 high schools and is active with homeschooling groups and microschoools. On any given day, Superintendent of Schools Travis Grulke will advise on accreditation, board development, conferences and trainings, school statistics and reports, sports championships, and school safety.

*“I am thankful for the dedication to Christian education shown to me by the members of my childhood congregation. Without their help, who knows what I would be doing today. ... It is my belief that Christian education is needed more today than when I entered this ministry,”* says Mr. Neil F. Webb, principal/religion teacher/physical education teacher at Christ Lutheran School in Stevensville, Mich.

In another District Office, Director of Leadership Development Rev. Dr. Rob Kasper constructs a leadership pipeline for youth. He prepares congregation staff and families to offer experiences that develop youth interest in future ministry. Dr. Kasper leads the volunteers who plan the junior high and high school youth gatherings—retreats that offer engaging worship, study, service, and fellowship.

*Continued on reverse side*



A2E Summer Camp

*“Some of the things they’re talking up on stage about speak to me. You never really know what people are going through and some of those things they’re saying are so relatable. It’s so nurturing and then to hear the Gospel being preached as well is so comforting. I’m inspired to live it out [faith] because there’s so much joy and I feel so at peace here that I really want to show other people,”* said Elliot, a participant in the 2023 Michigan District High School Gathering on Mackinac Island, Mich.

As shared on the Michigan District High School Gathering Wrap Up Video ©2023

Building a mission plan for youth in the Michigan District includes targeted efforts through the programs and staff in Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E) and college campus ministry sites. From summer VBS camps and job training at A2E to Bible studies, fellowship, and service at college campuses throughout the state, young people are finding Jesus in these places for the first time. Mission Strategy Director Rev. Dr. Todd Jones meets with stakeholders in the District to equip them with training and resources to carry out this Gospel work.

*“My favorite part of the whole week was watching our youngest 6th grade leaders transition from participating to helping put on this outreach program,”* said Mr. Matt Hire, Minister of Worship and Family Life, as he recalled The Vine Church’s Lego-themed VBS in Walker, Mich.

The Michigan District invites you to provide the financial seeds that will help us grow the future leaders in ministry and vocation for our Church. Your gift will enable the District to cultivate ground to grow the Gospel with youth and adults in all areas, ages, and activities of our work in Michigan.

Gifts to the Michigan District are not meant to replace or reduce your gifts to your congregation or other ministries. Instead, these gifts support our current congregations and church workers through District-wide training opportunities, congregation/circuit collaboration, strategic congregation partnerships with the community, and vision support for future ministry and innovation as we carry out this work together as People of Hope.

May our Heavenly Father abundantly bless the seeds you daily sow in His name.



High School Youth Gathering Servant Event

...eyes on Jesus ...

Rev. David A. Davis, President  
Michigan District, LCMS



**Yes, President Davis, I would like to support the Michigan District, LCMS!**

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of :  \$1,000  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50  \$25  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like my gift to support:

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|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Conference & Training Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Church Worker Scholarships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mission & Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development        | <input type="checkbox"/> A2E Support                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Endowment  | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Worker Care            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                             |

I’m considering including the Michigan District in my estate, please contact me.

To explore additional ways to give to the Michigan District, visit [michigandistrict.org/donate/ways-to-give](http://michigandistrict.org/donate/ways-to-give).

### Sharing Jesus With Adults Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Registration is open for the Michigan District's Special Friends Camp taking place this summer, July 15–19. Special Friends are adult individuals (age 18 and older) with cognitive disabilities. They each have their own unique set of abilities and challenges.



The mission of the camp is to share Jesus, the most special friend, with the campers. The camp also provides experiences to participants outside of their normal schedule and gives caregivers a break from daily responsibilities.

For more information or to register, visit [michigandistrict.org/sfc24](http://michigandistrict.org/sfc24).

### Church Worker Recruitment

God gives His Church pastors and church workers for the sake of the Gospel. Pastors proclaim Christ and administer the Sacraments, means through which people receive Christ's saving work. Church workers assist the pastoral office in service to the Word and witnessing to Christ daily in various roles. Christ's Church will continue until He returns, and that Church will continue to need workers.

Parents, grandparents, pastors, professional church workers, Sunday school teachers, and others are encouraged to influence children to consider serving the Church in these sacred and joyful vocations. Since church work is rooted in Baptism and a lifetime of hearing the Word, Set Apart to Serve (SAS) encourages young people to consider church work vocations primarily through their continued and faithful involvement with their congregation.

SAS is a church worker recruitment initiative of the LCMS. Resources are available for schools, churches, parents, and laity at [shorturl.at/deIJ3](http://shorturl.at/deIJ3).

### Student Loan Financial Assistance for Church Workers

Since 2015, MinistryFOCUS has awarded 313 grants totaling \$810,000 to pastors, Lutheran school teachers, directors of Christian outreach, directors of Christian education, and missionaries. These grants alleviate debt so professional church workers can focus less time on money and more on ministry that strengthens faith and brings more people to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

MinistryFOCUS, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, has awarded \$165,000 in grants to 55 church workers in 2024. Applications for 2025 will be available in the fall. For more information about how you can apply, visit [ministryfocus.org](http://ministryfocus.org).

Donations toward student loan debt can be made any time at [ministryfocus.org/donate](http://ministryfocus.org/donate).

### Explore Church Work Careers



Trinity Time is a retreat sponsored by Concordia University Ann Arbor for students, ages 15–18, who are interested in exploring the possibility of a calling into church work. This free overnight retreat includes times of worship and prayer, leisure and service,

study and conversation. Students spend the night in the dorm and enjoy life together through two days of activity. This summer's retreat will take place July 21–22, 2024. For more information or to register, visit [cuua.edu/trinitytime](http://cuua.edu/trinitytime).

## Special Recognition

### Couser Named 2024 Charles A. Winterstein Administrator of the Year

Mr. Matthew Couser, principal of Our Savior, Lansing, has been named the 2024 Charles A. Winterstein Administrator of the Year. Presented by Lutheran Special Education Ministries ([luthsped.org](http://luthsped.org)), the award is named after Charles Winterstein, a distinguished educational leader who served in Lutheran K-12 schools and universities, as well as at the district and national levels. The award recognizes the efforts of principals in Christian schools who demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of students with learning differences within their school.



Photo courtesy of Lutheran Special Education Ministries

Mr. Couser has been a Lutheran educator for twenty years, all at Our Savior. He was also recognized by the Michigan District, LCMS as its Principal of the Year in 2023.

In nomination letters, he was hailed as *“a strong advocate of providing resources for students with learning disabilities and those needing support in their learning.”* Another parent said, *“Matt has created a culture of caring in our school that embraces students with the love of Christ.”* Another nominee shared, *“Matt works tirelessly to serve students and families of our school community with a humble heart and contagious joy for Jesus!”*



Photo courtesy of Mount Hope, Allen Park

After serving for some time as vacancy pastor, Rev. Paul Pollatz was installed as pastor of Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Allen Park in March. He is pictured (left) with Rev. Robert Marshall.



*New Beginnings*  
**IN HIS PRESENCE**  
Revelation 21:5

Lodging, meals, and gratuities at the Grand Hotel  
**\$390**  
per person based on quad occupancy.

**Speakers:**  
Rev. Dr. Jeff & Renee Gibbs  
Rev. Dr. Ryan Tinetti - Chaplain  
Lizzie Boeck - Entertainment  
100 White Flag - Music

**Lutheran Adult Gathering | Mackinac Island, Mich.**  
October 11-13, 2024  
[www.michigandistrict.org/lag24](http://www.michigandistrict.org/lag24)  
Cost: \$50/person plus lodging  
Deadline to register is September 10, 2024



## Connections Through Braille

continued from page 3

thank-you cards, 704 Large Print sermons, 550 Large Print devotionals, 60 pages of Braille for preschoolers, and 160 pages of Braille for *The Mustard Seed*. These materials will be shipped to individuals who are blind or visually impaired throughout the world.



Photo courtesy of Lutheran Braille Workers

Rachel Potts, LBW's Director of Ministry Relations and Strategic Partnerships said, "*The theme of National Lutheran Schools Week this year is Connections, and I can't think of a better way to connect students to Jesus than to make books for people who are visually impaired. These books in turn connect people with visual impairments to Jesus in a format that they can read.*"

The day was a blessing to everyone who participated and will continue to bless those who received the books. Special thanks to St. John's Director of Admissions, Beth Dameron, for coordinating the day, to LBW staff member Jermaine Fortune (who flew from California and wasn't crazy about the cold), and to St. Paul, Ann Arbor member Madeline Potts for their help in running this amazing event.

If your church or school would like to host a Lutheran Braille Worker event, please contact Rachel Potts at

[rachel@lbwloveworks.org](mailto:rachel@lbwloveworks.org). If you or a loved one is visually impaired or blind and would like any of LBW's Christian materials for free, please contact them at 909.795.8977 or go to the website, [lbwloveworks.org](http://lbwloveworks.org). ■

*Rachel Potts is the Director of Ministry Relations and Strategic Partnerships for Lutheran Braille Workers.*



Church Extension Fund

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# Calendar of Events

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

## MAY 2024

- 6–7 North and East Pastors Conference  
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City
- 14–15 South and East Pastors Conference  
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 15–16 Circuit Visitors Conference  
St. Lorenz Worship & Event Center, Frankenmuth
- 18 Regional Track Meets  
Lutheran High North, Macomb  
Concordia University Ann Arbor  
Valley Lutheran High School, Saginaw
- 20–21 West Pastors Conference  
DoubleTree by Hilton, Grand Rapids
- 21 Board of Directors Meeting and Listening Event  
St. Matthew, Grand Rapids
- 22–23 Intentional Interim Ministry Conference  
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

## JUNE 2024

- 1 State Track Meet  
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 4–6 Next Generation Pastors  
Shelby Twp, Grand Haven, Bay City
- 10–14 A2E Summer Camp Detroit  
Location TBD
- 15 Community Worship Network  
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 18–20 FLAME Conference  
Ann Arbor
- 28–30 Michigan District LWML Convention  
Grand Rapids

## JULY 2024

- 4 Independence Day  
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 15–19 Special Friends Camp  
Camp Copneconic
- 29–31 Higgins Lake Conference  
Higgins Lake
- 30–Aug 1 Junior High Gathering  
Frankenmuth

# Calls and Roster Update

## ORDAINED

### Calls Accepted

- Rev. Jonathon Bakker (Mt. Pleasant, MI) to Campus Pastor, Concordia University Wisconsin
- Rev. Joseph Bangert (Sanborn, IA) to Sole, Immanuel/St. John, Rogers City
- Rev. Tyler Cronkright, SMP (Mt. Clemens, MI) to SMP, St. John, Rochester
- Rev. Christian Jones (St. Clair, MI) to Associate Pastor of Outreach, Trinity, Utica
- Rev. Keith Knea (Evansville, IN) to Sr., St. Michael's, Richville

### Status & Title Changes

- Rev. Garrick (Ricky) Beckett (Mt. Pleasant, MI) to Candidate

### Transferred Out of District

- Rev. Jonathon Bakker (Mt. Pleasant, MI) to South Wisconsin District
- Rev. Ryan Reese (Center Line, MI) to Northern Illinois District

### Transferred Into District

- Rev. Jake Bellinghausen (South Lyon, MI) from Eastern District
- Rev. Bart Fouts (Battle Creek, NE) from Nebraska District

### Called Home

- Rev. E. Paul Burrow

## COMMISSIONED

### Calls Accepted

- Buelow, Janis (Trinity, Utica) to Lakeview Ministries, Seymour, IN
- Earle, Sarah (Reinstated) to Trinity, Bay City
- Eifert, Jonathan (St. Michael's, Richville) to Our Shepherd, Birmingham
- Eifert, Mary (Immanuel, Sebewaing) to Our Shepherd, Birmingham
- Heins, Joseph (Immanuel, Sebewaing) to St. Paul, Fort Worth, TX
- Heissenbuettel, Monica (Candidate) to Our Savior, Hartland
- Lahrman, Sherri (Trinity, Sturgis) to St. Paul's, Fort Wayne, IN
- Korte, Faith (Emmaus, Fort Wayne, IN) to Our Savior, Lansing
- Siebarth, Jolene (Immanuel, Saint Charles, MO) to Holy Cross, Jenison
- Splattstoesser, Kelsey (Zion, Bay City) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- Stanley, Lisa (St. Paul, Bay City) to Bethany, Parma, OH
- Strieter, Hope (Immanuel, Belvidere, IL) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- Weiss, Rebecca (Candidate) to St. John, Fraser
- Witto, Gregory (Concordia, Mequon, WI) to Christ Our King, Saline

### Transferred Out of District

- Buelow, Janis (Trinity, Utica) to Indiana District

### Transferred Into District

- Kayser, Doris (Mid-South District) as Emeritus
- Volkert, Marianne (Northern Illinois District) as Candidate (Reinstated)

### Reinstated to the Roster

- Brenner, Renee

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



**Michigan District**  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

## GET EQUIPPED

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