

August 2024

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IN TOUCH

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

*A Biblical Asterisk

by Rev. David A. Davis

Don't get lost in what follows. There is an asterisk.

Of course the most famous and perhaps cherished Bible passage is John 3:16. It certainly does not need to be cited here because you have just now recited it in your head. We call it *The Gospel in a Nutshell*.

The verse after it is a good one too. "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him*" (John 3:17). This is an important verse that helps the Church understand its mission of following Jesus' footsteps to go into the world with a message of salvation, not condemnation.

The two verses before it are also good. "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life*" (John 3:14–15). These are important verses that help us to understand the Old Testament better. The Old Testament lays the

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Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS



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groundwork for understanding the person and the mission of the Christ.

Remember, there is an asterisk coming.

These verses refer to Numbers 21. During the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites were complaining yet again against YHWH, so he sent fiery serpents against them. The serpents were biting and killing the people. The people called to Moses for help. YHWH told Moses to make a serpent out of bronze and direct the people to look to it. Whoever looked to the bronze serpent would live.

This passage serves as a “type” of Christ; you might call it a physical rather than verbal prophecy. (Keep reading. Wait for the asterisk.) It pointed to the same reality that would be fulfilled in Jesus, as the Gospel writer John makes clear.

There are other examples of this. Jonah is one. So is the account of David with Goliath. That passage is not really about how YHWH helps you go up against giants; it is about how YHWH provided the Son of David to do that for you. You might re-read the account of Esther

in light of this. Esther, about whom it was said “for such a time as this,” points us more to the excellent timing of the Father sending Jesus to be Savior of the world (Romans 5:6) than it does to whatever timing you might find in your life as you face a difficult time.

The asterisk is just around the corner.

John 3:14–15 is a great example of what Jesus did for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Remember how they said, “*Did not our hearts burn within us when he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*” (Luke 24:32). The Old Testament is full of prophecies and typologies regarding the

person and the mission of Jesus. Chief and clearest of them is this event, the bronze serpent as a type of Christ. All this comports with John 5:39. Jesus said, “*You search the Scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life, and it is they that testify about me.*”

Now here is the asterisk. There is an asterisk to the bronze serpent as a figure of salvation. You will find that asterisk in 2 Kings 18. After the days in the wilderness, apparently

that which had been a vehicle for the Israelites’ salvation had become a snare. The bronze serpent had been named Nehushtan and was an object of worship in and of itself. What had been a good

thing had become an idol. What had been an instrument of God’s grace had become an end in and of itself.

King Hezekiah, a follower of YHWH, did what needed to be done. He destroyed the idol.

We should pay attention to this example (see 1 Corinthians 10:11). We Christians need to be on guard about this very temptation. All too easily good things become ultimate things. All too easily religious items and practices can become idols. Religiosity can lead us to idolatry.

There are many temptations and experiences in life that can pull us away from faith in Jesus. Such things never present themselves as wicked or abhorrent. Rather, Satan is at work to pull us away from Jesus by offering us things that present themselves as good, pleasant, and even religious.

Let us be careful lest we fall. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, lifted up on the cross as prefigured in the wilderness, raised from the dead as prefigured by Jonah, reigning at the right hand of the Father as promised to David, and soon, may it be very soon, returning as He told His Church to expect.

But let us also remember the asterisk of 2 Kings 19. Let us fix our eyes on Him and the grace He gives, not the vehicles (religious practices, traditions of man, church buildings, human beings) that lead us to Him. The idols of the world allure. But they are not in the world alone. Oddly, religion can lead us away from Jesus. May the faithfulness of Hezekiah be borne out in us today. Together, may we together cling to the person of Jesus revealed in Scripture (John 3:14–15) and share His salvation with the world (John 3:17).



****Gideon’s ephod is a second asterisk. Judges 8:27 ■**

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

**“Let us fix our eyes on Him
and the grace He gives ...”**





Partner Churches

by Daniel C. Meckes

Throughout the Scriptures, we are given a picture of people in partnerships: Adam and Eve, Jesus and His disciples, Peter and Paul, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Timothy, Paul and the early Christian churches. This list could go on and on and on!

Partnerships have been around since the beginning of human life and are still evident in our lives today: husbands and wives, parents and children, and throughout the business world. This list could go on and on and on also!

But what about partnerships among our Christian churches today? **Can we use this age-old concept in a new way today?** Can we use the opportunity of partnerships to enhance the work of God's Kingdom here on earth to their fullest potential and to the glory of God?

We are surrounded by a mentality and belief in this world that defines partnerships as, "We both contribute equal amounts and we both mutually benefit in equal amounts." If it doesn't work that way, then most will believe that a partnership is of no use to us.

In contrast, partnerships in the Bible weren't all about equal return. Partnerships in the Bible were all about God being glorified through the work of His people together in communicating the Gospel victory of Christ Jesus. Granted, it didn't always appear that way, especially when Peter and Paul had issues in working together, but what is amazing is that God even used the inability for these two men to partner together to still expand the sharing of the Gospel and the work of His Kingdom! What an amazing God we have!

I remember when one of our sons told me that he was never going to get married (he was in his 20's at the time!). He had dated quite a few girls but had discovered that none of them really brought that much to the table of making his life better. So why bother? He didn't quite understand that this type of relationship isn't about what

you can get out of, but instead it's about what you can give into it! I told him that someday he was going to meet a young lady whom he would realize he could help achieve her full potential, and that he would discover a very fulfilling partnership. And he did!

Maybe your congregation has this same "why bother" mentality as our son did: "We are doing fine and all is well. If we try entering into a partnership it will take a whole lot of work and what will we get out of it?" But is God's Church all about the local congregation only, or is it about His Kingdom work and seeking every soul for Jesus?

Is your congregation ready to partner with another congregation?

Probably not. So invest in a season of prayer. Ask God to use your congregation not just for the sake of the people at (*fill in your congregation's name*) but to use HIS congregation for the sake of the Gospel reaching out to all people.

Who do we partner with?

Look at your sister LCMS congregations around you. Is there one who could benefit by your partnering with it? Sharing the encouragement of your five youth with their four youth so they can play nine-square together, for example? Could you network together and share a list of Bible studies (topic, days, and times) with the congregations in your circuit and invite any and all to be part of them? Do you have a pastor who led you through an amazing Bible study that could benefit another congregation if he led it there? Maybe even trading pastors so their pastor could lead you through his expertise study? The possibilities are endless. Why

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God's Work in Southwest Detroit's Hispanic Ministry

by J. Ricardo Granado



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

More than 26,000 Hispanic migrants have arrived in Detroit in the last 5 years. Many of them have left their homes and families behind due to the economic and political crisis that their countries face, being persecuted, fleeing from gangs out of fear of losing their lives, and going through very painful tragedies in their lives.

They have traveled thousands of miles to reach this country in hopes of finding a better future for their families. Many of them arrive without any physical possessions, but with an intact faith. They are those whom the love of God reached in their countries and are willing to live their faith in Christ, wherever God takes them, and grow together with other families. Others come full of doubts and despair, but God's love has reached out to them along the way with acts of compassion and mercy that hundreds of churches have shown them. Others are still being called by God and He is using many of us to bring His love and forgiveness to them.

God in His sovereignty has placed these Hispanic immigrants near us, and it is a unique and precious opportunity to do mission and show compassion without having to travel far. As a Church we have a lot to do, with God's help, in order to communicate His grace and Gospel.

In partnership with Family of God, St. Stephen, and the Michigan District, the Hispanic ministry is joyfully serving God and the Hispanic community in Detroit. We constantly visit them at places that they frequent such as warehouses, schools, grocery stores, and their own homes, to support them with clothing, food, furniture, etc., but most importantly, with the love of God in Word and Sacraments.

The Hispanic Ministry also partners with different organizations in the city of Detroit that support Hispanic immigrants. This connection has been incredibly valuable for outreach within the community. An example of this is Maiko Camacho's story. One afternoon, pastor Granado received a call from "Detroit Hispanic" because they needed help with a person who did not speak English. He had arrived in the city at the end of October 2023 after having been kidnapped by

a drug cartel in Mexico. They needed someone who could guide him and give him words of hope. So that afternoon Pastor Granado met Maiko and they have walked together for the past several months. God has done the work in his life, and he was baptized on Sunday, November 19, 2023, since, despite being 28 years old, he had never been baptized. On Sunday, May 19, 2024, Pentecost Day, Maiko was confirmed as a member of Pan de Vida Lutheran Church.

Stories like these are the ones we want to share with you, stories in which God's love is being poured out into the hearts and lives of many immigrants who are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

You can also be a part of what God is doing among this community! Pray for this ministry, participate as a volunteer in some of our events and activities, or financially support us. You can also support us by opening your congregation to start a Bible study or a small group if your area has a significant Hispanic population; this way we will be able to reach various parts of the state of Michigan.

Revelation 7:9 paints a beautiful picture of the triumphant praise of all nations: *"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"*

What a joy it is to celebrate together what God is doing in the lives of those He is sending into our midst. May God continue to use us to share His love and forgiveness with them. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Thank you for joining us to do it together! ■

Rev. J. Ricardo Granado is the Michigan District Missionary Pastor for Hispanic Ministries.

“God in His sovereignty has placed these Hispanic immigrants near us, and it is a unique and precious opportunity to do mission and show compassion without having to travel far.”



Photos courtesy of Glenn Schaeffer

Sharing God's Grace with Rwandans

by Glenn E. Schaeffer

Rwanda is known as “*The Land of a 1000 Hills.*” As one drives through this beautiful country, it seems to be a land of a *million* hills because the vehicle is always going up a hill, or down a hill, or navigating a curve. The countryside is filled with crops, as farmers cultivate tea, coffee, maize, wheat, sweet potato, bananas, and plantain among other agricultural products and, in certain areas, dairy cows. Rwandans fill the city streets and highways as they travel to the market, go to school, work, or make their way to a worship service.

Unfortunately, when the country of Rwanda is mentioned, one's thoughts immediately turn to the 1994 Genocide. During one hundred horrific days, an estimated 1 million people—men, women, and children were killed. More than 75% of the Tutsi population (about 950,000 people) were wiped out and almost all Hutu moderates (about 50,000 people) were executed.

Although the genocide is over, the effects of it linger still thirty years later. The government is doing a good job of enabling the country to recover economically, but there are many lingering social and spiritual issues.

“*Come over to Rwanda and help us!*” was the invitation issued by Bishop Alfred, senior Pastor of Beth Ammi Christian Fellowship Church. “*The people of Rwanda need God's grace and forgiveness.*” Persistent wounds need healing. Trust between people needs to be restored. Forgiveness needs to be shared. Those who grieve need the comfort and hope of Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life. Widows and orphans need Jesus' compassion. Congregations need church buildings. Pastors and other church workers need a salary that they and their family can live on, and the government requires that each pastor have a degree from an accredited institution. Pastors and laity need to be rooted deeply in God's Word.

“Persistent wounds need *healing*. Trust between people needs to be *restored*. Forgiveness needs to be *shared*. Those who grieve need the *comfort and hope* of Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life.”

At Bishop Alfred's invitation I traveled to Rwanda in 2018. I have since returned three more times, with my wife, Sandra, accompanying me on two of those mission trips. I have been privileged to lead seminars for pastors and lay leaders on 1 Peter, Romans 1–8, 1 Corinthians 15 and, most recently, on The Lord's Prayer. Sandra has had the opportunity to lead the ladies of Beth Ammi Christian Fellowship Church in seminars. While in Rwanda, I also travel with a translator to remote regions of the country so that I can visit with the local church leaders and preach at their worship services.

While Beth Ammi is a nondenominational church, my trips to Rwanda have connected me with Rwandan confessional Lutheran church bodies. My mission trip in April included having pastors from the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church—Rwanda and Lutheran Mission in Africa (Rwanda) – Synod of 1000 Hills participate in the three-day seminar on The Lord's Prayer. At the beginning of this seminar, I was able to give each participant (100 people in all) a copy of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* in Kinyarwanda (the language spoken in Rwanda) which I was able to purchase from the Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

I led a half-day seminar on Psalms 90–91 with pastors and future church workers of the Lutheran Mission in Africa led by Bishop Selestine Seburikoko. I also preached at a communion service.

I was able to visit with some of the leaders of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church—Rwanda, which is led by Bishop Dr. Mbarushimana Bernard. I preached at two of their churches. One of the congregations located in Kagitumba was especially on my list to visit because St. James, Grand Rapids has been providing financial assistance to the congregation (led by Pastor Eldaphonce) so that 20 unwed mothers in the community may have the essentials needed to feed and care for their child(ren).

What do the churches need? How might we help them? The needs of the parishes are numerous, but they include:

- Biblically based, confessionally sound teaching and training of the pastors;
- Church buildings that meet code;
- Salaries for the pastors so they are not living in poverty and instead, are able to focus their efforts on being pastors to the people/community;
- Transportation for the pastors/evangelists;
- Basic food items for unwed mothers;
- Daily food (like porridge) for most children;
- Training/skill development for the unwed moms;
- School tuition provided so children can attend the public school;
- Goats, pigs, chickens for each household;
- In the case of the IELC (Rwanda) they are seeking membership in the confessional International Lutheran Council with the hope that membership will open doors to Lutheran church bodies that will support them financially.

Beth Ammi Christian Fellowship Church has formally asked me to return to Rwanda on an annual basis so that I may be a mentor and Bible teacher to their pastors and other church leaders.

I would be happy to visit your congregation to talk more about the churches in Rwanda and how we might support them. If you have any comments/questions, please contact me at glenn.schaeffer22@gmail.com! ■

Rev. Dr. Glenn E. Schaeffer is the pastor at St. James, Grand Rapids.

***This mission outreach was supported in part through the Michigan District, LCMS Igniter Grant. This grant can be used to assist a local congregation with an international mission project involving human care and gospel proclamation.*



Members holding copies of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* in Kinyarwanda (the language spoken in Rwanda).

Shopping for South Sudan

by Patricia Nuffer



“The “tangible” love of Christ in the kits and items made here is almost immeasurable in the impact on the lives of people in South Sudan.”

“Retail therapy” is a phenomenon known to many people in the USA as a joke or the almost inborn desire to buy something to satisfy some desire. It is, though, an almost universal desire, as I learned that even in South Sudan people are attracted to the markets not only to buy or sell, but to see people and be seen.

So, you might ask, what does a shopping experience look like for Hands of Mercy? A recent donation exemplifies the experience here in the USA.

A couple invested in Thrivent Insurance long ago and are now reaping the benefit of “Choicing” some dollars to different charities. One such gift of \$1,200 came to Hands of Mercy recently and, as stewards of such funds, we get to decide how to spend it.

What does a thousand dollars buy in Yambio, South Sudan?

- A borehole (well) outside the village of Nasoro where Hands of Mercy is building a small school for a local congregation. We dug this well for the Hands of Mercy compound and the primary school in Yambio;
- A roof, plaster, and paint to complete the pit latrine we started in 2023;
- Shelves, a charcoal stove and vinyl floor covering for a new indoor kitchen building;
- A wheelchair and five fifty-pound suitcases of girls’

menstrual kits, first aid supplies, little girl dresses and boy shorts, and even an adapted new sewing machine to get all the way from Michigan through Uganda and into South Sudan;

- Feeding Hands of Mercy people three hot meals a week for almost a year;
- Salaries of our two managers, cook, cleaner, and shop keeper for 10 months.

It is an interesting shopping trip, with a marvelous “therapy” benefit. Not only do we get to make the purchase decisions, but more than that, we get to see firsthand how the Lord turns \$1,000 into life-changing exchanges. Girls stay in school, simple bone pain remedies are given out, children run around as living advertisements of the bounty of the Lord’s hands of love, and clean water flows and is ready to be collected right where they live, to name a few. I hope I never forget the simple pleasures of bringing a colorful quilt to the oldest person in the area to sleep on, or a wheelchair that allows a child to go to school with her peers. The “tangible” love of Christ in the kits and items made here is almost immeasurable in the impact on the lives of people in South Sudan.

To learn more about Hands of Mercy, or to donate, visit handsofmercymission.org. ■

Deaconess Patricia Nuffer is the Director of Hands of Mercy.



Photos courtesy of Patricia Nuffer

AUGUST 2024

On the Road With Rod

CEF Director of Relations is On the Road!

Rod Barodte finds that the best way to build relationships in ministry is to spend time together.

So far in 2024, Rod has been busy visiting some of the wonderful ministries Church Extension Fund is able to partner with to grow God's Kingdom.



Andy Sohn, Rod, and Jim Saalfeld at Best Practices in Phoenix



Rod with his Mom Mary Barodte at Council of Lutheran Women Luncheon



Pastor Timothy Sheridan - St Luke Harrison

Some of Rod's travels this year include:

- 56 Visits with ministry workers to see their churches, schools, and daycares in person
- 9 CEF Sundays, being able to worship with congregations across Michigan and tell them about how they can continue to partner with CEF
- Attended Best Practices for Ministry Conference in Phoenix Arizona with Jim and Andy, learning about and being inspired by so many unique ministries across the LCMS
- Through June 2024, Rod has driven 17,000 miles
- Numerous sponsored events in the Michigan District, including the LMWL Conference in Grand Rapids, 3 Regional Pastors Conferences, the Council of Lutheran Women Luncheon, Michigan Lutheran Leaders and Ministries Event, the Office Personnel Conference, the Snow Tire Conference, a Circuit Convocation event, and the Principal's Conference
- Meeting with various individual investors to hear how we can be better partners in ministry (and you can too!)

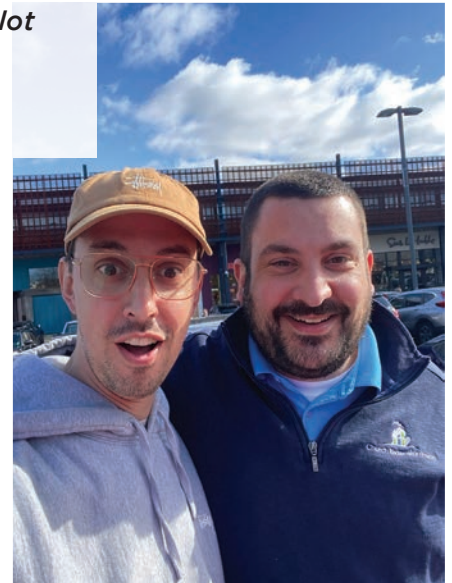
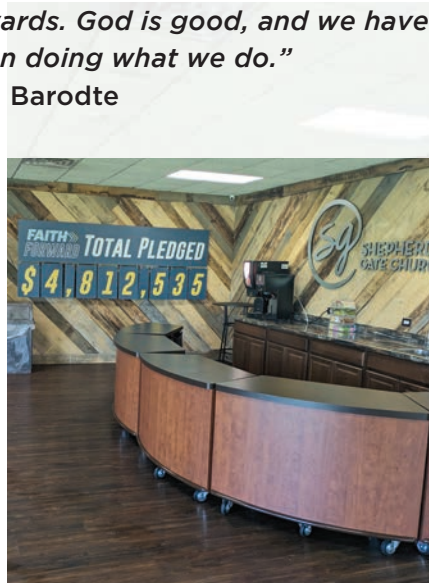
Building relationships is a core value in the ministry of Church Extension Fund.



“When we literally walk together with our brothers and sisters in Christ across the various, wonderful ministries we are in fellowship with, we can better serve them with the tools CEF offers as financial stewards. God is good, and we have a lot of fun doing what we do.”

- Rod Barodte

LWML Conference Julie Burgess and Rod Barodte - Financial Stewardship Session



Crown of Life Rochester Hills

Shepherd's Gate Building Fund Wall

Marcus Lane - Campus Pastor ULC



“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”
Psalm 133:1

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

2024 Spring Convention Report

The annual convention of the Lutheran Laymen's League (LLL) was conducted on Saturday, May 11, at the St. Lorenz Worship and Event Center in Frankenmuth.

The convention was chaired by LLL District President Dennis Engelhard. He was installed as president along with Gil Bartz as vice president, Phil Krauss II as secretary, and Phil Krauss I as treasurer.

Minutes from the 2023 convention were approved along with the fiscal year 2024–25 annual budget.

Attendees also heard reports from the LWML, Lutheran Hour float petal pushers, MOST Ministries, and Michigan District, LCMS President David A. Davis.

President Davis encouraged the laity "to move the Kingdom ahead" and do what they could to reach others with the Gospel of Christ. He encouraged the laity to read their Bibles daily.

Jeff Craig-Meyer, President of U.S. Ministries, provided an update on Lutheran Hour Ministries programs and on the mission of *Project Connect*, a booklet ministry whose goal is to reach out to people

with a Christian message of love and hope.

Dr. Chad Lakies, vice president of ministry engagement, led a spiritual conversation workshop.



Michigan District, LCMS President David A. Davis addresses the annual convention of the Lutheran Laymen's League.

Photo courtesy of John Raffel

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

TASTE AND SEE THAT
THE LORD IS GOOD



PSALM 34:8



Lutheran Women
in Mission
MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Convention 2024

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Post Convention Voting Results:

Mission Grants selected

Election Results

and much more....!!



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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

2024 Summer Appeal

Every morning at staff devotions, we pray for four Michigan District church workers. It's a privilege that helps us to know and support each of them by name. As we near the celebration of Church Worker Appreciation month in October, let's explore the paths and passions of four servants in the Michigan District:

Brian Horning, Director of Family Life Ministry at Zion, Petoskey

Brian's family attended Zion, Auburn, where his calling to Lutheran education became apparent through youth group participation, teaching Sunday School, and involvement in church and school music programs. When he learned about the Family Life program at Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA), he knew he had found his church work vocation. In the last 15 years, he has served four congregations and stayed active with Concordia Center for the Family as a volunteer leader and trainer.



He counts his participation on the program staff at Camp Arcadia, attendance at the Best Practices Conferences in Frankenmuth and the Men's Retreat at Camp Arcadia, as well as his close ties and mentorships through CUAA as his most impactful experiences in the Michigan District.

Advice to those considering church work: "Be in the Word! It is how He leads and gives direction. It is also how He comforts us and drives out the voice of the devil that is trying so hard to lead you away from God's way or say that you aren't 'good' enough."

Shannon Johnson, Director of Family and Student Ministries at Lakeshore Lutheran Fellowship, Spring Lake

Watching her faithful parents and grandparents serve in the church choir, coffee hour, Bible study leadership, and church council had a significant influence on her decision to work in ministry. Her pastor and youth group cemented her desire to work with youth.

When Shannon and her husband joined Lakeshore Lutheran Fellowship in 2012, Pastor Chris Boehnke encouraged her to continue to volunteer and eventually brought her into a staff role and mentored her. Her role allows her to meet families and youth where they are—games, choir concerts, plays, swim meets, and anywhere else.



She appreciates the District conferences and cluster meetings, where she can learn and exchange valuable experiences and advice with others in similar roles.

Advice to those considering church work: "When you are leading and serving God's people, it is important to remember why you are doing this and who you are serving! Jesus takes us as we are and, as we abide in Him, He multiplies it, so we are enough and have enough. Also, read your Bible, anchor your identity in Christ, and be an image bearer of the One True King!"

Laura Kitman, First Grade Teacher at St. Michael, Wayne

Laura says, "I was raised Lutheran and my family was always involved in our church. We prayed at home and we attended and helped with VBS, Sunday school, youth group, and many other church events. I planned to go into either nursing or education, but after not being accepted into my first-choice college, I decided to attend CUAA. That was such a work of the Holy Spirit! Going to Concordia and experiencing life with friends who were going into the teaching ministry cemented that this was something I felt called to do."



Laura has taught preschool through second grade, as well as split grade classes. In addition, she has served as a preschool director at two schools and as a music director, librarian, and art teacher.

Continued on reverse side

She is thankful for opportunities to learn from pastors, principals, and fellow teachers who serve alongside her in the District, and especially appreciates the Early Childhood Conference and the Professional Church Worker Conference.

Advice to those considering church work: “Shadow church workers, ask questions, learn from them. Pray, and ask others to pray for you as you decide. It is a very rewarding calling with the opportunities to allow the Holy Spirit to use you in ways you might never have imagined.”

Rev. Dr. Trevor Sutton, Senior Pastor at St. Luke, Haslett/Lansing

St. Matthew, Walled Lake played a vital role in Pastor Sutton’s formative years. God used his parents and other influential adults, worship, Sunday school, Confirmation class, and the National Youth Gathering to capture his imagination for what it might look like to serve the Church. He enrolled at CUAA with a soccer scholarship in hand to be a special education teacher, but soon altered his path towards the seminary.

Twelve years later, he’s still serving at St. Luke, his first call. Pastor Sutton has also been blessed with the opportunity to write books and articles for the Church at large, as well as teach at various Concordia Universities and LCMS sister seminaries around the world.



He is thankful for the financial support of the District—and the donors—that made it possible for him to attend seminary. He also appreciates the programs that the District offers for new pastors, as well as the regular pastor and church worker conferences.

Advice for those considering church work: “Do it! I can think of no better or more fulfilling life than serving God’s people through church work. So many people struggle through work that is unfulfilling or lacking in meaning. Not in church work! Serving God’s people in the Church is among the most fulfilling and meaningful tasks that we can do!”

Will you join us in thanking God for our faithful servants in the Michigan District?

We are committed to providing resources and assistance to over 3,100 District church workers. Under the *Healthy Workers* critical target, our goal is to help them to be professionally and personally healthy. Your gift helps us attain that goal.

Please visit www.michigandistrict.org/summerappeal to download note cards to send a note of thanks and encouragement to our church workers. We will send them to schools and churches throughout the District and may publish some of them in our social media channels in October. Your financial gift, in addition to a shared note, will be a blessing to Michigan District church workers.

May God’s Kingdom increase through our faithful church workers!

...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 _____

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Congregation/City _____

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Greatest Need (Unrestricted) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church Worker Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Sower’s Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission & Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Church Worker Scholarships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Endowment | <input type="checkbox"/> Conference & Training Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

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

To donate via credit card visit michigandistrict.org/summerappeal

Return to:
Attn: Development Department
Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Road Ann Arbor, MI 48105

The Language of Missions: An Evening with Tanner and Blake

MOST Ministries and the Michigan District, LCMS are hosting an inspirational evening of music, poetry, and storytelling with Christian performers Tanner Olson and Blake Flattley on Saturday, October 5, at St. Luke, Ann Arbor.

Tanner Olson is an author, poet, and speaker living in Nashville, Tenn. with his family. The mission of Tanner's writing is to spread hope and announce love. From classrooms to churches to coffee shops to conferences, Tanner has traveled the country performing poetry, delivering messages of hope, and sharing stories. You can find Tanner's work at writtentospeak.com and @writtentospeak on Instagram.

Blake Flattley is an accomplished singer-songwriter and the head of 1517 Music (1517.org). He has toured nationally, recorded several albums including the recent 1517 Music release *Freedom Lessons*, and served as a worship arts director for churches in Southern California, Houston, New York City, and Phoenix. Blake and his family currently live in Southern California.

The Language of Missions is a benefit concert to raise awareness of the rich history and support for mission efforts in the Michigan District. MOST is celebrating 35 years of sending mission teams around the world to share the Gospel in Word and deed with people in need. The Michigan District is a natural partner, promoting both local and international mission volunteering and funding



opportunities to over 340 congregations in the district.

Admission is \$35 for pre-order and \$45 at the door. Reserve your spot at michigandistrict.org/missionconcert for the performance and an afterglow with Tanner and Blake at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor, Mich., where MOST Ministries started 35 years ago. Listen to the exciting opportunities to share the Gospel that both MOST and the District are developing and consider how you might be part of the plan. After the concert, enjoy refreshments while visiting with friends. Additional merchandise will be offered by the performers in the lobby.

Date night, girls' or guys' outing, poetry lovers, music lovers, mission supporters, young and old—come one, come all for a night of celebration!

New Beginnings IN HIS PRESENCE Revelation 21:5

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



**Lutheran Adult Gathering | Mackinac Island, Mich.
October 11-13, 2024 | www.michigandistrict.org/lag24**

Speakers:

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

Cost:

\$50 Registration + Lodging



Connect Students to College Campus Ministry

Are there students in your congregation heading to college in the state of Michigan? You can connect them to an LCMS campus ministry. A network of campus ministries and local congregations from Michigan, English, and North Wisconsin Districts are ready to support your college student this fall.



Campus ministry provides a nurturing environment where students can thrive and find belonging within a faith community during their time at school.

Create meaningful connections and foster spiritual growth among the next generation of leaders by sending us their contact information, or let them know about this opportunity by checking out michigandistrict.org/campusconnect.

St. Lorenz Stephen Ministry Celebrates 35 Years of Caring for Others

The St. Lorenz Stephen Leaders of Frankenmuth, Mich. wanted to give thanks to God and show appreciation to their current and former Stephen Ministers with a celebration. The celebration took place in May at the Bavarian Inn. The evening included fellowship, a delicious meal, special thanksgiving tributes to Rev. Dale Ahlschwede, Rev. Gary Bender, and Rev. Shawn Fenske, along with heartfelt testimonies from two grateful care receivers. These care receivers shared how Stephen Ministry helped them get through very difficult times in their lives.

In the last 35 years, 233 people have been trained by St. Lorenz and have spent countless hours sharing God's love and compassion. Presently, St. Lorenz has 56 active Stephen Ministers.



Photos courtesy of St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

Elli's House Annual Gala 2024

Elli's House was founded in 2017 by Deb Ellinger, a native Detroiter. While working with teen girls who consistently ran away from home, she saw there was a clear need for shelter in the city. Elli's House is a 501(c)3 nonprofit serving homeless and runaway women. It seeks to abolish human trafficking in Detroit. The ministry does this by forming relationships, offering safe shelter, and providing education. Today, there is a two-year residential shelter program and a middle school mentoring program. Food, hygiene, and clothing are supplied to survivors weekly through street outreach.

Elli's House's Annual Gala, *Night at the Races*, will take place on Friday, October 4, at the Vintage House in Fraser. The cost is \$75/person. For more information or to place your reservation, visit ellisgala.regfox.com/ellis-house-gala-2024. This ministry is supported, in part, by the Michigan District, LCMS and many generous donors.

Port Huron Circuit Convocation

This past spring, congregations from the Port Huron Circuit, along with the St. Clair Varsity Boys and Girls Cross Country Team, met at what is known locally as the BP Trail (Bridge to Bay Trail). The Convocation project was to plant new trees all along the pristine trail, which encompasses 50 acres of woods, trails, and ponds.

The group planted more than 600 trees and numerous bushes over a three-hour span of time. Everybody working together to enhance the trail enjoyed lots of sun and laughter. It was a great first event for Circuit 14. Two more events are planned for later in the fall and include a workshop for church leadership teams and a circuit-wide Reformation service.

2024 Circuit Convocations are co-funded by Church Extension Fund and the Michigan District, LCMS.



Photos courtesy of Port Huron Circuit

Local Lutheran Broadcast Expansion

In June, *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer*, the radio/podcast ministry of St. John's, Taylor, expanded its national coverage by adding WMUY in Memphis, Tenn. to its log of stations. WMUY AM 830 covers over 2 million people in Memphis and beyond. WUMY FM 105.5 is a full market class A FM covering all of one of the largest and most iconic cities in the Bible Belt with over 1 million in the primary coverage. The half-hour program is offered Sunday evenings. Locally, *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer* is available Sundays at 6 p.m. on WRDT AM 560, and on Mondays at 8 p.m. on WMKM AM1440.


The speaker on *Martin Luther's Evening Prayer*, Rev. Dr. Richard Zeile, has served as St. John's Pastor since 2001, and established the radio ministry in October of 2009. In 2021, congregations of the Michigan District Downriver Circuit voted to fund an international short-wave broadcast of the program, first on WWRB of Morrison, Tenn., and then in 2022 changed to WRMI for a Monday broadcast reaching North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. 2023 saw the addition of WNWRAM540 covering Philadelphia, Pa.; Wilmington, Del.; and Trenton, N.J. with a 7 p.m. Sunday broadcast. This latest addition to the list was made possible by generous gifts of individuals from Michigan, Iowa, and other states, as well as by members of St. John's.

Trinity Paw Paw Sends Students to Science Tournaments

This spring, Trinity Lutheran Middle School students in Paw Paw were given a grand sendoff celebration when part of the team, with Assistant Coach and Principal Bill Semrau, headed to the State Science Olympiad at Western Michigan University (WMU). The other part of the team headed with Head Coach Jennifer Phifer to the National Kidwind Alternative Energy Competition in Minneapolis. After competing in the WMU Olympiad, two students joined the team in Minneapolis. The sendoff included local law enforcement and fire departments, Senate Minority Leader Aric Nesbitt, and numerous congregation and community members.



Photo courtesy of Trinity, Paw Paw




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Lutheran World Relief Ingathering October 2024

A postcard, with dates and locations, will be mailed in August.

**More information can be found at:
michigandistrict.org/lwrgathering**



Special Recognition

Bangert Installed

Rogers City's dual parishes, St. John's and Immanuel, celebrated the installation of Rev. Joseph Bangert. An afternoon Vespers service at Immanuel featured a combined choir and guest pastors. Dinner and fellowship followed. Pictured are Rev. Joseph Bangert and wife, Carrie.



Photo courtesy of Immanuel, Rogers City

Varblow Ordained and Installed at St. Mark's, Brooklyn

On Sunday, June 16, St. Mark's, Brooklyn witnessed the ordination and installation of Pastor Bryan Varblow into the Holy Ministry. While he has served at St. Mark's as an SMP vicar for the past two years, the congregation is excited to now have him as a pastor to serve alongside Senior Pastor Rev. Bryan Schindel (Cross and Resurrection, Ypsilanti). Pictured are Rev. Bryan and Amanda Varblow.



Photo courtesy of St. Rev. Varblow

Ghana Seminary Graduates

In May, The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana held its graduation. Ten men received diplomas for completing pastoral training. Seven men were recognized for completing their first year of residential pastoral studies at the Seminary.

During the graduation, nine women deaconess students and eight pastoral students received recognition for completing distance education courses from Westfield House (the Lutheran House of Theological Studies) at Cambridge University in England. These men and women are continuing their studies in Ghana.

Rev. Dr. David Erber serves as a theological educator. He teaches at the Accra seminary and serves as the field coordinator for the Concordia Seminary St. Louis online Master of Arts in Theology program. He is pictured here (in red gown) with these the graduates.



Photo courtesy of Rev. Dr. David Erber



Photo courtesy of Camp Concordia

Rev. Bart Fouts of Battle Creek, Neb. (pictured center) was installed as the new Executive Director of Camp Concordia in Gowen, Mich.

Partner Churches

do this? Because we are all in this Gospel proclamation of Jesus together! Ecclesiastes 4:9 – “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.”



continued from page 3

What if a sister church near us doesn't have a pastor? Could we partner with it so that God's ministry is strengthened in its community?

Absolutely! Historically, many times our LCMS churches have joined together and created dual parishes (one pastor serves each congregation part time). This may be a possible option, but before saying “Let's just become a dual parish,” let's ask first: can we become partner churches? The key difference is that your intent in coming together is not to just share a pastor and both congregations exist independently of each other, but your intent is to partner, that is, to make stronger the mission and ministry of God together. Partner churches would actively engage in conversation, identification of goals, and agreement before joining together in the ministry areas that you will initially be intentional about partnering together in (Vacation Bible School, Confirmation, women's ministry, men's ministry, youth ministry,

young adult ministry, preschool, day school, community outreach ... you can see the possibilities are endless!). An amazing bonus is that you have the potential of doing these things in two different locations, impacting even more of your local community.

The blessings of partnerships and partner churches:

- Working together (for God's Kingdom!);
- Encouragement;
- Accountability;
- Being able to steward God's gifts for His Kingdom building (pooling resources);
- Being Synod (“walking together”) in action.

Please note: a partnership is not covenanted over a handshake. It is led by prayer and the Word of God—to the glory of His name and for the growth of His Kingdom.

Want to know more?

Ask your Michigan District Facilitator. Visit michigandistrict.org/facilitator/ to learn more. Subscribe to the podcast so you won't miss an episode! Follow us at michigandistrict.org/about-us/publications/podcast-subscriptions/. ■

Rev. Daniel C. Meckes is the District Facilitator (part-time) for the Metro West Region. He is also an associate pastor of Journey Lutheran Church in Oxford, Mich.





Church Extension Fund

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Calendar of Events

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

AUGUST 2024

- 4–6 Board of Directors
Bay City, Mich.
- 6 Early Childhood Directors Day
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 7 Early Childhood Educators Conference
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 27 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 30–9/2 Labor Day Holiday
District Office Closed

SEPTEMBER 2024

- 4–5 Circuit Visitors Conference
Peace, Ann Arbor
- 8–10 Deacons Conference
Camp Arcadia, Arcadia
- 14 Community Worship Network Gathering
Faith, Grand Blanc
- 17 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 17 New Church Worker Conference
DoubleTree by Hilton - Riverfront, Bay City
- 23–26 Intentional Interim Ministry Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale
- 27–29 Church Extension Fund Conference
Auburn Hills, Mich.

OCTOBER 2024

- 5 The Language of Missions Benefit Concert
St. Luke, Ann Arbor
- 11–13 Lutheran Adult Gathering
Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island
- 14–16 All Pastors Conference
Grand Traverse Resort, Acme
- 17–18 MANS Education Conference & Expo
Detroit
- 21–23 Ministry Specialists Conference
Camp Arcadia, Arcadia
- 22 Board of Directors
St. John, Rochester
- 24–26 Pastoral Leadership Essentials
Locations TBD

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Vicars Assigned to the Michigan District

Mr. Joshua Steele (St. Louis) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

Calls Accepted

Rev. Mark Gilson (Fruitport, MI) to Sole, Chapel of the Lakes Lutheran, Mecosta, MI

Rev. Kurt Overway (Montague, MI) to Sole, Saint Stephens, Shelby

Rev. Dr. Ryan Peterson (Whitmore Lake, MI) to Sr. Development and Church Relations Officer, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN

Rev. Dr. Charles Schulz (Dexter, MI) to Professor, Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, IL

Rev. Dr. Ryan Tinetti (Arcadia, MI) to Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

Rev. Dr. James Wright (Altamont, IL) to Sole, Trinity Berrien Springs

Status & Title Changes

Rev. Robert Riggs (Carson City, MI) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Rev. Joseph Bangert from Iowa West District

Rev. Keith Knea from Indiana District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Dr. Ryan Peterson (Whitmore Lake, MI) to Minnesota South District

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Fritsche, Kirsten (Trinity, San Angelo, TX) to St. Peter, Macomb

Hambaum, Patricia (St. John, Bay City) to Trinity, Reese

Massey, Madison (St. Paul, Macomb) to St. Paul, Boca Raton, FL

Neumeyer, Paul (Immanuel, Macomb) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (Northwest)

Volkert, Marianne (Candidate) to LHSA, Rochester Hills (Northwest)

Change of Status

Auger, Robert (Our Savior, Bad Axe) to Emeritus

Mueller, Scott (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Lanning, Joyce (Emeritus) to Pacific Southwest District

Transferred Into District

Strieter, Hope (Northern Illinois District) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth

Removed From Roster

Keller, Connie

School Closings

Chelsea, Lambs of Our Savior Christian Preschool

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

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