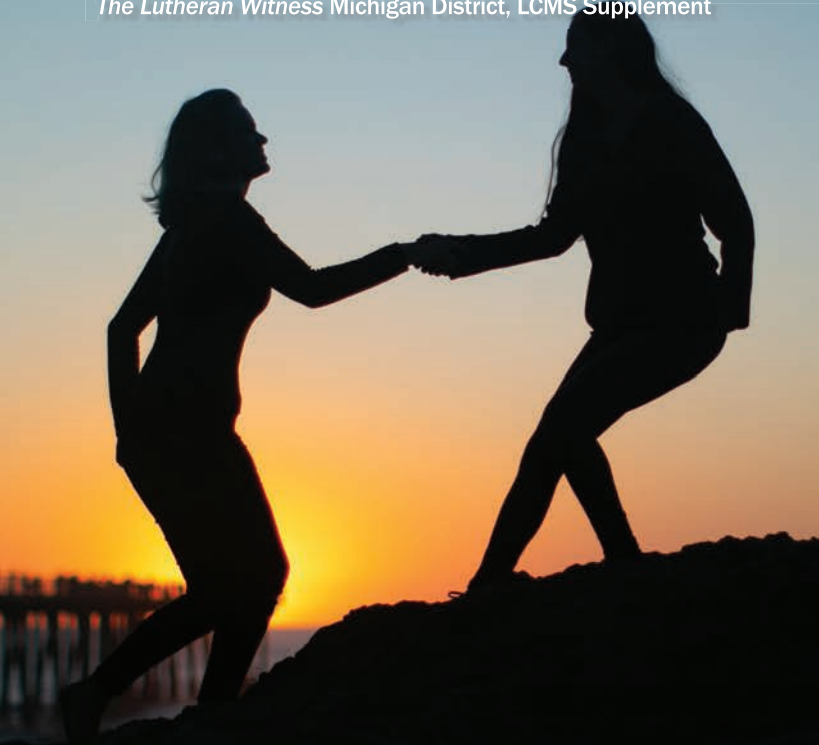


November 2024

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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 New Word for the Holidays

by Rev. David A. Davis

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, many do much to help people in need. Doubtless you are one of them. Too often, however, our help can be little more than an exchange of goods: serve at a food kitchen, provide a gift for a child in need, send money to a homeless shelter. All that is good. But there is something more. Let me tell you about a friend's wife and a new word.

My friend's wife is Jenn*. My friend and I have

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IN TOUCH

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known each other a long time. I am not sure I have ever met his wife. But I have heard of her.

My friend and Jenn are faithful followers of Jesus. They are very active and involved in their local congregation. They are well known in their community.

In addition to this, or because of this, Jenn has a unique personal relationship with Jane.* Jane has issues. She needs help. Lots of it. The government, along with other social service agencies and the Church, provide her that help. Lots of it.

Except.

Except that the help from the government, those other agencies, and the Church, is convoluted and difficult to properly access. That's where Jenn comes in.

She has taken a personal interest in Jane and serves as a link or a map or a guide or a—well, call it what it really is—a friend to Jane to lead her through all of that. Tons of services and help are available. Friends are few. Friends are needed to make help help. That's what Jenn is and does.

Spoiler alert: Jenn is often frustrated in her attempt to help Jane. It takes lots of her time. Often her efforts seem futile.

Jesus calls us to be like Jenn.

Remember how Jesus' opponents criticized instead of celebrating Him for being a friend of sinners? You can almost hear them spit. But of course, that is exactly what he was ... and is.

Jesus is a friend of sinners, including you and me. He did not let the religious structure of the day get in the way of providing the help it was intended to provide. As the divine Son of God, he humanized it (true God/true man). He personalized it. He healed, forgave, rescued, saved *individuals*. He was sent and died for the world, indeed to save the world, but the world is saved personally, that is, person by person, one person at a time.

As Jesus is, so He calls us to be. He calls us to be friends with sinners, that is, person by person, one person at a time.

A recent book introduced the neologism "enemyfying": viewing opponents as enemies. Shakespeare was famous for neologisms. I am no Shakespeare, but how about this word? *Friendifying*. The work of the Church and individual members of it

“He (Jesus) was sent and died for the world, indeed to save the world, but the world is saved personally, that is, person by person, one person at a time.”

are charged with the friendification of individuals.

That brings us back to Jenn. And you and me and the coming holidays.

Yes, let's stay very engaged in our local congregations and the help they provide, especially at this time of year. Let's work with other agencies and organizations that provide help to others. But let's stay actively, personally, messily, gratefully involved in the lives of others individually, person by person. Like Jenn.

Who is your Jane? A neighbor who lost his wife and needs companionship? A grandchild who needs a listening ear? A coworker who needs help navigating the system? A client who always has some issue? A stranger God has brought across your path inviting you to a new friendship?

The Kingdom of God is large and powerful. Larger than we think. We'd like it to grow still more. We'd like bigger congregations and more of them. We'd like to see the power of the Kingdom impacting our communities, nation, and the world more and more.

Keep this in mind at this time of year. The Kingdom is at its largest often in the smallest of things: Jenn, as a follower of Jesus, friendifying Jane.

For more information, see Matthew 25:31 and following.

**Of course, these are not their real names because they are to be the names of everyone. That's the point. ■*



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



Why *Pray* for Your Church?

by Christopher K. Paavola

God's Church advances through prayer. We see it in Jesus' commands to pray, "your Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10) and to pray for "workers in the harvest" (Matthew 9:37–38). We see it again in the Early Church who gathered in prayer meetings before the outpouring of God's Spirit (Acts 2:1, 4:31). Even today, when the Church sees remarkable growth in persecuted regions of the world, it's a story that cannot be told apart from the great prayer that preceded it.

But over the years, even though Christians know the importance of prayer in the life of the Church, I've noticed people struggle to know how to pray for their church. Not because people don't love their church, or that they don't love God enough.

People struggle to pray for their church because they don't know how to pray for their church.

PRAYER AS IT IS

In their defense, if you were to ask someone to pray for your church, think of all that could mean—

Do you mean prayers for the church building itself? Or do you mean the people in the church? Or the leadership? Or all of the above? Because the request is vague, the prayers that follow tend to be vague, as well:

"Lord, please bless my church. Amen."

There's nothing wrong with that prayer, *per se*. And yes, God can use prayers like that. But the problem with general prayers is it's hard to know how God answered them, specifically. Isn't He already blessing their church with his gifts and forgiveness? So how would anyone

know if God responded to their prayer with some new blessing?

PRAYER AS IT COULD BE

Compare the vague prayers described above to a clear and detailed prayer for your church that asks, *"Lord, give us attentive eyes and skillful hands to see and care for what's been neglected on our campus. Show us what we can put in good order now so we don't have an expensive repair later. If it's broken, or dirty, or overgrown, forgive us, God, and move us to be good stewards of it, that your name may be honored even there."*

There's no question the clear and detailed prayer not only looks expectantly for God to move, but also knows **WHAT** to look for, specifically! Of course, once you see a specific answer to prayer, it only inspires more prayer.

PROMPTS

But there's one other problem keeping people from praying for your church. Even if you give people a list of topics to pray about, they still need guidance on how to pray for that topic.

Suppose you ask folks to pray specifically for the Youth Ministry leaders at your church. Without some prompting, even a specific topic of prayer will once again devolve into vague prayers, *"God, please bless our Youth Leaders. Amen."*

The fervent prayers your Youth Ministry leaders want range from prayers for protection against the Evil One to wisdom in teaching to trusting relationships with parents.

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PTSD and the *Ministry of the Gospel*

by Dale M. Kleimola

As you read this article, keep in mind that I am not a mental health clinician. What follows comes from personal experience, research, and conversation with others.

When you think of post-traumatic stress, what is the first thing that comes to mind? If you are like most people, your immediate thought goes to the military who experienced first-hand the trauma caused by warfare. However, the military is not alone in experiencing the mental illness. Millions of non-veterans suffer from PTSD. The National Center for PTSD estimates 5% of Americans suffer from PTSD in any given year (*Ptsd.va.gov*). It should not come as a surprise that educators in our Lutheran day schools and pastors, each of whom are on the front lines of spiritual warfare, are subject to the disorder. Of course, many members of our congregations also experience the debilitating effects of this mental illness.

According to Soul Care Counseling, a study at

Danielsen Institute at Boston University of pastors across denominations, 35% of clergy met the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis. According to that study at least, serving as a pastor is the highest-risk profession for developing PTSD: “Many pastors and former pastors do have the symptoms of PTSD and suffer from Pastoral Post-Traumatic Stress without realizing it” (Dr. Mark Riley, *Pastoral Post-Traumatic Stress*, April 28, 2021.)

What is post-traumatic stress disorder? According to the Mayo Clinic, “*Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event—either experiencing it or witnessing it.*”

Some of those events include childhood trauma, sexual abuse, witnessing a traumatic event, frequent life-changing events, and frequent fighting between parents and other family members or friends of the family, especially when there is physical or emotional abuse. In addition to this, church workers experience



It is important to be able to recognize the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder either as one with PTSD or one associated with an individual ...



PTSD as a result of protracted conflict (think of trouble working with the church council or school board and pervasive difficulties in voters meetings in which the individual or his/her work is attacked), and witnessing the death of a parishioner or multiple funerals in a short period, especially when the death was particularly traumatic. Of course, there are other causes in addition to these situations.

It is important to be able to recognize the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder either as one with PTSD or one associated with an individual displaying these symptoms:

- Changes in physical and emotional reactions to life events;
- Being easily startled or frightened;
- Always being on guard for danger;
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much;
- Life-risking behavior;
- Trouble sleeping;
- Trouble concentrating;
- Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior;
- Overwhelming guilt or shame. (Google, *PTSD symptoms*)

In addition to these symptoms, the illness also leads to paranoia—the unsubstantiated fear that others have the intention of sabotaging your ministry. In order to find relief from the symptoms, other addictive behaviors besides alcoholism are common. Finally, demonstrating self-destructive behavior, such as thoughts of committing suicide, thoughts of taking another person's life, or attempting suicide are significant symptoms of PTSD. Note that many of these behaviors are also symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are also experienced with PTSD. When these symptoms appear, it is important to immediately seek mental health assistance.

Recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder requires multiple points of attack: Long-term psychotherapy with a reputable mental health worker, perhaps a Christian therapist*, and medication. Christians ought to seek relief through Christ-centered meditation, reading the Bible (especially the Psalms), frequent reception of the Lord's Supper, and prayer, especially praying the Lord's prayer. In addition to this, confiding in a pastor for a listening ear and the opportunity to hear the Gospel time and time again is extremely helpful, as is talking

with a colleague or mature Christian who will not betray confidence.

If a close friend or relative is diagnosed with PTSD (or exhibits symptoms of the illness), make sure they follow their treatment plan. If their symptoms do not improve after 6 to 8 weeks, you can encourage them to talk about it with their health care provider. You also can:

- Offer emotional support, understanding, patience, and encouragement.
- Learn about PTSD so you can understand what your friend is experiencing.
- Listen carefully. Pay attention to the person's feelings and the situations that may trigger PTSD symptoms.
- Share positive distractions such as walks, outings, and other activities.

It is important to note that there may be a much-improved life when PTSD is treated. Many find that the symptoms of their illness lessen or go away with professional treatment. Others struggle with the disorder throughout their lives. In either case, seek treatment to gain a healthier life.

I had a personal experience with the disorder several years ago. I was meeting with a mentor. During our time together, I started to complain about my life and the sense of persecution (paranoia) I was experiencing. After listening to my complaints, he interrupted me and said simply, "Dale, take it to the cross." Those six words made a dramatic difference in my life. The suggestion was one of many life-altering moments I experienced in my journey to improved mental health and the enjoyment of life with my Redeemer and the people of God.

*The Michigan District Mental Health Case Manager, Christie Hansard, is available to help you find a Christian counselor in your area. You can contact her at 734.845.2972 or by email at christie.hansard@michigandistrict.org. ■

Rev. Dr. Dale M. Kleimola is a 1979 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He earned his Doctor of Ministry in 1994. He has served congregations in Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan. He is the husband of Gail, a father of five, stepfather of four, grandfather of nineteen and great-grandfather of one. He is retired and enjoys being a substitute pastor for congregations in need.

Backpacks of *Compassion* by Elisa L. Schulz



Brandon Underwood, a member of Open Arms, Belleville, is a Kindergarten teacher at Tyler Elementary in Belleville. The school serves 400 kids, 63% of which are low income. A quarter of those 400 students don't get much food apart from the school meals.

Brandon and his mother, Dana, have been involved with Open Arms' homeless ministry in Detroit (serving lunches to 150 homeless people, doing clothing drives and collecting home goods for transitional housing), but they were looking for something more local to focus their attention on. At one of the church board meetings in May, Rev. Larry Courson (who has been serving as Interim pastor at Open Arms since 2022) mentioned that Tyler School is only 1.5 miles away and asked what the church could do to help. Ideas were bounced around and someone mentioned a backpack ministry that provides food for kids during the weekend, when they don't have access to school breakfast/lunch. Brandon, who is also one of the board members, went home and told his mom and, in his words, "we kind of ran with it." Dana called Courson that same night to volunteer to run the program.

Courson said, "It started with an idea and nothing else. We didn't have a backpack, we didn't have any food; we had nothing other than the need and the teacher and a mom who was willing to help." Team Tigers (named after Tyler school's mascot) started at the same time as summer school on July 15, which means the church had less than two months to come up with the food and the backpacks so they could send them home with the kids the first week.

They served 26 students (out of 100 enrolled) during summer school. At that time, Open Arms Daycare was holding a summer camp. Older campers do service projects, and one of the projects was packing food into the backpacks. Initially, everything was stored

in Pastor Courson's office and the first two packings were done there, but then the church built a locked closet for the pantry where the food and the backpacks are kept.

Fast forward to September. School started and forms were sent out to all families. Brandon explained that food-deficient families return the form so that their students can receive a backpack full of food on Fridays. They are then expected to return the backpack on Mondays so it can be packed and sent home the next Friday. The backpacks are numbered in case the nametags get lost and also as a way to keep track of how many meals each child should receive. Each backpack has a tiger keychain to identify Team Tigers. This year they are just doing this for Kindergarten, but the goal is to eventually reach all grades.

During the worship service on September 8, Courson's sermon was based on James 2:17 ("So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead") and emphasized being the hands and feet of Christ. To exemplify this, he read a text that Dana had sent him earlier. She wrote, "Team Tigers is definitely a blessing to these students. Brandon has a student who went for the free breakfast. As soon as she got to class, she asked Brandon when lunch is. Immediately after lunch, she asked when snack time was. That poor baby was hungry! Brandon reached out to mom to tell her about Team Tigers and told her he sent a survey home for her to fill out for next week. Mom was very appreciative and said they didn't have very much food, so we put together a backpack for her for this weekend. She has a sister in pre-K at another school, so we packed extra food for her as well. Broke my heart but I'm so happy that we are able to help these kids!!" ■

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



NOVEMBER 2024

Church Extension Fund is Thankful for its Ministry Partners

During this season of thanksgiving, CEF would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all our ministry partners. Throughout the year, it has been our great honor to walk alongside you in your many endeavors and to provide the tools needed to continue helping build God's Kingdom.



New Life Community Lutheran Church in Swartz Creek received one of three \$10,000 bonus grants from CEF and Mighty Fortress Foundation

In 2023, CEF had the privilege of offering the Ministry Worker Wellness Grant, which provided funds to ministries to support the well-being of their staff. Some of the events carried into early 2024, and we received an outpouring of thanks from

ministries across the Michigan District for the grant and its results. The Ministry Worker Wellness Grant was made possible through a partnership with the Mighty Fortress Foundation, and CEF is grateful to share in this work with a

like-minded and mission-focused ministry.

Throughout 2024, the Circuit Convocation Grant has been awarded to more than half of the circuits in Michigan (and it's not too late to apply!) A circuit typically consists of about eight churches in a similar geographic area working together to extend mission and ministry in their region. CEF matched the Michigan District's grant funds to encourage more outreach through these circuit gatherings, with the aim of making hope, reconciliation, and love for our neighbors a hallmark of the churches we serve.

All of this is possible because of the congregations that continue to answer the call to help build the Kingdom. CEF provides construction loans, lines of credit, and investment opportunities to ministries we partner with, and we hope to form even more partnerships in the years ahead. Without our partners in the pews, pulpits, and mission fields, CEF wouldn't be able to offer the grants and services we do.

As we approach the new year, we encourage even more



CEF is thankful that Messiah - Midland (L) and St. John - Rogers City (R) used our grant to look after their workers wellbeing through events and team-building exercises.

partnership with CEF in all areas of your ministry. For 123 years, CEF has been a trusted partner of churches, schools, and other ministries. If your church isn't yet a ministry partner, we invite you to join us in the coming year. Does your church have a CEF representative? Has your church taken advantage of our grants in recent years? Have you

considered inviting Rod or Andy to your church for a CEF Sunday? These are just a few simple ways every church can participate in our ministry, and we will continue using the blessings God has given us to equip your ministry with the tools it needs to help build God's Kingdom.

CEF's blessings have allowed us to provide an average of

\$1.3 Million annually in support to our District, congregations, schools and other ministries. This is only possible because these ministries and their members invest nearly \$200 Million with CEF. This commitment from them helps CEF continue to bless its partner ministries, too.

Thank you!



*"For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."
1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV)*

Consider Attending LLL Retreat at Camp Arcadia in 2025

Dennis Engelhard, president of the Lutheran Laymen's League Michigan District, is inviting all LCMS district men to attend next year's Arcadia Retreat.

"The retreat was fantastic. The theme for our September 2024 retreat was 'Go and Tell'," Engelhard said. "Our chaplains were Pastor Tom Schraeder and Pastor Alex Sabol. Our speaker was Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy. He brought some very powerful examples of how our lives can be enriched by working hard to be God messengers."

He continued, *"We committed to a goal of bringing 150 people to the Arcadia retreat for next year and we pray for the support of all LCMS congregations to make men aware of this powerful spiritual experience in the lives of all who attend. This retreat has gone on*

for 78 years and we have people who have attended for more than 50 consecutive years. We have people who drive from Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Once you've been there, it's hard to stay away."

For more information regarding next year's event, watch for upcoming articles or visit camp-arcadia.com/attend-arcadia/mens-retreat/.



Photo courtesy of LLL

Development

Politics, Thankfulness, Reconciliation, and a Baby

by Laura Thomas

The last two months of 2024 are not quiet. The political ads will reach their height in early November, and we'll have an outcome that some will like and others will not. Thanksgiving is typically a time for family togetherness and gratitude for what God has given, but it can also look like an empty chair at the table. Reconciliation, this year's theme for the District, can be a hard-fought battle of prayer and forgiveness that results in a new relationship; or it can be finding the strength and hope to try again.

But the Baby Jesus isn't elected, has infinite room at the table, and became Reconciliation for us. It is fitting that we end the calendar year recalling with joy His simple birth that calms the calendar noise.

Baby Jesus came to heal the division, ingratitude, and unforgiveness. As we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and move toward reconciliation with others, let us remember to give most generously of our gifts of unity, thankfulness, intercession, and forgiveness.

If financial gifts to charities are your year end tradition, consider where reconciliation can be accomplished. Any mission that is based upon the Word of God and our Reconciler, Jesus (the Word-made-flesh), including your congregation, the Michigan District, and those ministries supported by each, is a great place to start.

Be encouraged! Use these last two months of 2024 to serve, speak, and live in ways that show our noisy world God's Gift of Reconciliation in His Son, Jesus.

Abiding in Thanks Living

- Keep a gratitude journal writing down one thing you are grateful for each day and lifting up a prayer of thanks
- Pay for someone's coffee in the coffee shop line
- Invite someone to an activity or worship service at your church
- Prepare a meal for a neighbor family or shut-in
- Share your faith on social media
- Give an encouraging word or gift to someone you don't know
- Buy an extra bag of groceries for someone in need
- Send a "Thankful for you" postcard out to friends/family/church members once a month
- Every week, write something you are thankful for in a piece of paper and put it into a thanksgiving jar; then, at the end of the year, open the jar and read all the notes

What if before we ever begin our Thanksgiving season, we were to start living thanks before God in a continual state? What if we prayerfully recognized where all things come from every day of the year? Even more, what if our thanksgiving was rooted not in our circumstances, but in God Himself? Giving thanks to God for all His blessings and provisions at Thanksgiving time is a wonderful tradition but continuing this year around becomes more than tradition. It becomes a way of life, made possible by the love of God shown to us in Christ.

Excerpt from the November 24, 2020 blog, *Celebrating Thanksgiving by Thanks-Living*, spurgeon.org

Dinner and Discussion at Solid Grounds

On Monday evenings from 6–7:30 p.m., Solid Grounds Campus ministry meets for dinner and discussion. The first half of the event is dinner and conversation, and in the last 45 minutes there is a discussion on a variety of spiritual topics.

This fall semester discussion is based on *Be Still: A Guide to Quiet Times*. One of the biggest struggles for a Christian is taking time to be still in the presence of God. This is especially true of college students. The discussion focus is on developing a regular rhythm and a deeper daily relationship with God through an in-depth look at the Bible passage from Isaiah 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.”

Campus Minister Rev. Mark Couch shares, “One of the things that I have heard from students over the years is that when they take time to do a devotion, pray, be still, and listen to Christian music, their day goes so much smoother.”

Solid Grounds Student Ministries is a campus ministry that serves the students, faculty, and staff at Western



Photos courtesy of Rev. Mark Couch

Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Solid Grounds is an outreach ministry that is supported by Zion Lutheran Church in Kalamazoo and by the Michigan District, LCMS.

Connect your college student to an LCMS campus ministry or faith community in Michigan! Go to michigandistrict.org/campusconnect/ and introduce your student. We will do the rest.

Journey to Bethlehem

Join Immanuel, Saginaw on December 6–8 for its free 30-minute outdoor living nativity. Travel to the ancient town of Bethlehem to pay your taxes and be counted in the Roman census. Hear the shepherds talk about the angels’ proclamation. Listen to the prophet talk of signs and wonders. Enjoy the city alive with activity, see baby Jesus asleep in the manger, and more. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, visit frankentrost.org or like on Facebook (www.facebook.com/LivingNativityImmanuelFrankentrost).



Photo courtesy of Immanuel, Saginaw

High School Musicians are Invited to Lutheran Summer Music

Enrollment for LSM 2025 is open now! Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) is a faith-based residential music academy for high school students who come together to immerse themselves

in musical excellence and build a supportive and fun community. Musical experiences include large ensembles (band, choir, orchestra), chamber music, private lessons, and electives like handbells, jazz, musical theatre, composition, conducting, church music, and more. Priority enrollment deadline: December 1, 2024. Standard enrollment deadline: March 1, 2025. Learn more at LSMacademy.org.



Million Dollar Life Match for Bus Stop in Grand Rapids

In January of 2022, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) launched a unique program to support LCMS congregations involved in providing beginning-of-life care in their local communities. The program, aptly named the *Million Dollar Life Match*, provided up to \$1 million in matching-fund grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000 each, to assist with these efforts.

These grants have been used to support life ministry projects; serve families with beginning-of-life needs through Word and Sacrament ministry; provide supplies like diapers, clothing, and other much-needed items; and help local pregnancy resource centers with renovations and equipment purchases like ultrasound machines. Though each project has been unique, every grant has provided an opportunity to serve families in love and mercy.

As of March 2024, a total of 144 grants had been

awarded throughout the Synod's 35 districts. In 2022, Our Savior, Grand Rapids received one of these matching grants totaling \$4,350 for its bus stop project near the Grand Rapids Pregnancy Center. They saw the need for moms and their families who travel by bus to the center and were often standing in pouring rain, snow, or hot sun. In 2023, these funds provided the installation of a structure, bench, and solar lighting for the bus stop. Our Savior continues to be actively involved with the center (see michigandistrict.org/newsroom/a-bus-stop-blessing/).

The *Million Dollar Life Match* will continue through 2026, with application deadlines in January 2025 and January 2026. Call 888.843.5267, ext. 1217, to speak with Kris Freeman in LCMS Life Ministry about how your congregation can get involved in life efforts.

National March for Life

LCMS President Matthew Harrison and LCMS Lutherans from around the country will gather to walk together during the 2025 National March for Life in Washington, D.C. on January 24, 2025.

Join President Harrison and other Lutherans to stand boldly together in the public square and confess our beliefs about the sanctity of life. The day begins with Divine Service at 9 a.m. at Immanuel Lutheran Church; 1801 Russell Rd; Alexandria, Va. followed by brunch in the church fellowship hall. The March for Life begins at 1 p.m. To register your attendance or for more information, contact Kris Freeman at Kristin.Freeman@lcms.org or 314.996.1217.



Photo courtesy of Faith, Prescott

New Members at Faith, Prescott
Pictured (l to r): Dave Blankertz, Ruth Blankertz, Pastor Ed Meyer, Sue Discher, and Charlie Weidman

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Special Recognition

Julie Nielsen-Schmidt Receives Recognition from Synod

Julie Nielsen-Schmidt, D. Min., received a letter of gratitude, recognition, and honor for her service and for maintaining her Ecclesiastical Endorsement in LCMS Spiritual Care Ministry from Rev. Brian R. Heller, Manager, Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, Office of National Mission, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Julie is a deployed Michigan District, LCMS staff member who has served in hospital ministry at Michigan Medicine, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor for 42 years.

In a small pinning ceremony held at the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, Julie received from President Davis the pin that accompanied her recognition from the LCMS. Also present were Julie's husband, Ted; her District supervisor, Rev. Randy Johnson; and Rev. Dr. Robert Kasper.



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS



Photo courtesy of Holy Cross, Saginaw

Celebrating its 175th Anniversary year, Holy Cross, Saginaw installed Rev. Kurt Brandon (pictured front row center) as its pastor on Sunday, September 8, 2024.

Pegg Recognized as SMP Vicar

In September, Trinity, Port Huron recognized John Pegg as its SMP Vicar. After completing his deacon training from Kairos University and the Michigan District in 2023, Pegg was called by Trinity to further his education toward ordination in the ministry. He and his wife, Gordana, are excited to serve God's people and the local community while being formed through Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



Photo courtesy of Trinity, Port Huron



Photo courtesy of St. John, Pinconning

Rev. Gregory Hyatt (pictured center) was installed on September 29 as pastor of St. John, Pinconning.



SAVE THE DATE

February 1, 2025 | Our Savior, Lansing, Mich.
michigandistrict.org/theo25

We Are Not Alone:

Engaging your Community Together

1 Kings 19:18

A Conference for Church Members and Church Workers



104th Michigan District Convention
June 22-24, 2025 | Concordia University Ann Arbor

Important Dates/Deadlines

January 31, 2025 - Circuit Forums Deadline

February 22, 2025 - Nominations Deadline

February 22, 2025 - Overtures Deadline

April 5, 2025 - Regional Pre-Convention Meetings

For forms and additional information visit:
michigandistrict.org/convention

Why Pray for Your Church?

But the average church member doesn't usually think or pray that deeply about topics outside of their expertise.

To pray for your church, you need both the topics to pray and the prompts to pray.

PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH

Pray For Your Church is a website designed to "helping your church pray for your church."

Each week we release a new prayer for your church that covers a specific topic and gives you a prompt to consider some of the ways you could pray about that topic. Each prayer is written in the first person, and can be used by both individuals and groups.

Visit prayforyourchurch.com and sign up to get weekly updates and see what God will do when you *Pray For Your Church*. ■

This article first appeared on Prayforyourchurch.com, a website by Rev. Christopher K. Paavola who serves St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Battle Creek, Mich.



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Church Extension Fund

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Calendar of Events

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

NOVEMBER 2024

- 1 All Saints Day
- 2 State Volleyball Championship
Concordia University & St. Paul, Ann Arbor
- 5 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 5–6 Next Generation Pastors
East Lansing
- 8 Admissions Workshop
St. John, Rochester
- 19–20 IIM Discernment Event
District Office, Ann Arbor
- 24–26 Connections Teachers Conference
Fort Wayne, Indiana
- 28–29 Thanksgiving Holiday
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

DECEMBER 2024

- 24–25 Christmas Holiday
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED

JANUARY 2025

- 1 New Year Holiday
DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED
- 7 Board of Directors
Christ Our King, Saline
- 21 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 30 Michigan Lutheran Leaders Meeting
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton

FEBRUARY 2025

- 1 We Are Not Alone Conference
Our Savior, Lansing
- 6–7 Snow Tire Conference
Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth

MARCH 2025

- 8 State Basketball Tournament
Concordia University & St. Paul, Ann Arbor
- 8 Building Up the Kingdom in Joy Conference
St. Luke, Haslett
- 18 Board of Directors
First, Charlotte

APRIL 2025

- 5 Regional Pre-Convention Meetings
Detroit, Livonia, Clio, Grand Rapids

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. John Bookshaw (Big Rapids, MI) to IIM, Trinity, Paw Paw
Rev. Maxx Fisher (New Melle, MO) to Associate, St. Matthew, Grand Rapids
Rev. Dietrick Gladden (Eastpointe, MI) to Sr., St. Thomas, Eastpointe
Rev. Daniel Lepley (Belmont, MI) to Sr., Mount Calvary, Greenville
Rev. Thomas Phillips (Jacksonville, IL) to Sole, St. Paul/St. Matthew,
Kalkaska/Mancelona
Rev. James Weist (Lame Deer, MT) to Sole, Lutheran Church of the Lakes,
Addison

Status & Title Changes

Rev. Alfred Kersten, SMP (Lincoln, MI) to Emeritus
Rev. Lewis Stier (St. Clair Shores, MI) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Rev. Maxx Fisher (New Melle, MO) from Missouri District
Rev. Daniel Lepley (Belmont, MI) from English District

Called Home

Rev. Charles J. Koehler
Rev. Michael L. Teuscher

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Saleska, Candice (Candidate) to St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
Zeddies, Michael (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth) to Immanuel, Saginaw

Change of Status

Grams, Susan (Our Shepherd, Birmingham) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Grams, Susan (Candidate) to Kansas District

Transferred Into District

Bienz, Clinton (Indiana District) as Candidate

Resigned From the Roster

Barger, Anna

School Closings

Kalkaska, St. Paul Preschool
Marlette, Our Savior School and Preschool
Pinconning, St. John Preschool

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

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