

Spring 2025

michigan

A publication of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Church Extension Fund

IN TOUCH

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Enough

by Rev. David A. Davis

There are not enough pastors. There are not enough teachers. There are not enough volunteers.

Small congregations. Stagnant congregations. Closing congregations.

The promise remains. *“I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18b ESV).*

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There are at least three things we should take notice of in this short verse. First, the work of building the Church is the work of Jesus and He will accomplish it. Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, works through the power of His Spirit by His Word to draw people into the Christian faith. We should believe this to be true. Jesus will build His Church.

Second, He is intent on building His Church. Not your congregation. Not our denomination. His Church. Certainly, congregational life is God's plan for Christian living. The partnership that happens within a denomination is a great resource. But the

“Let's come together and make the most of the opportunity that we do have with the resources we have.”

end work of Jesus is building His Church, the Holy Christian Church, the one people of God.

Third, He says the gates of hell or Hades cannot prevail against it. Commentators have interesting insights into this phrase, what it refers to. But for our purposes let us simply understand it as an argument of the greater to the lesser. If nothing as great as the gates of hell can prevail against Jesus and the building up of His Church, then it doesn't sound like something lesser (culture, the government, alternative religions) can either.

All of this is to say that we do have enough to go about our work and life together in our local congregations, the District, the Synod, and beyond. We have Jesus' power. We have His goal. We have His assurance.

So, let's be at it, doing what we can with what He has given us at this time. Remember the miracle of the five loaves and the two fish? "... bring them here to me" (*Matthew 14: 18 ESV*). Instead of being concerned with what we don't have enough of, let's bring what we do have and put it in Jesus' hands. Let's love one another. We have enough for that. Let's love our neighbors. We have enough for that. Let's proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. We

enough for that too.

Yes, from one point of view we wish we had more for the Church and her congregations than what we have at hand. But let's come together and make the most of the opportunity that we do have with the resources we have. Specifically, consider the following:

- Begin one new community outreach initiative with your neighborhood with what you have. The key thing you have, by the way, is proximity.
- Love one another within your congregation. Build community with those who are already there.
- Share resources with other neighboring congregations. Share pastors, other church workers, volunteers. Remember, Jesus is at work to build His Church, which is not the same as your congregation.
- Be open to closing your congregation if resources would be better utilized by another congregation.
- Don't be closed to opening a new congregation. If a new one thrives, even at "the expense" of yours, we celebrate a victory for the Church.
- And pray. As you seek to be faithful over what God has given you for ministry, pray to the Father to send more workers into the harvest as Jesus instructed. This is indeed a time for the Church and her congregations not to wring their hands in anxiety but to fold them in prayer.

We desire to build healthy congregations. And God has given each of them enough to be so. He has given us His Son. He has given us His Word. He has given us His Spirit. He has given us His promise. He has given us to each other. He has given us enough resources to do what He calls us to do: join in the work of Jesus as He builds His Church in the face of even the worst adversary. ■



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

Arise & Shine: A Call to Join the Harvest Partnership – Michigan Network

by James F. Richter

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1–2, ESV).

Our Savior, King Jesus, rescues us from darkness and calls us to bring His Good News to the world. This mission is especially urgent in Michigan, where many people—particularly those 35 and under—are hungry for Jesus. In public spaces, from schools to libraries, I’ve witnessed a growing interest in Christ, especially among those who have left the church. Our opportunity to share the light of Jesus right now is as great as it’s ever been in my nearly 30 years of pastoral ministry and church planting.

An Opportune Moment for Mission

According to *The Great Dechurching*, 51% of those who have left church are willing to return. Even more striking, 1 in 5 of the over 335 million Americans who live, work, and play with us consider themselves believers in Jesus but don’t have a church home. These “dechurched” people are ready to talk about Jesus, and through prayer, love, and meaningful conversations, many may come to join our church families and new church plants.

A Call to Plant Churches in Michigan

In the LCMS, approximately 1% of our 5,800 churches close every year. In Michigan, we need to plant 3.5 new churches each year just to maintain our current number of congregations. Our hope and prayer should be to grow—not just maintain. With God’s help, and the Holy Spirit working His mighty Gospel work in us and Gospel proclamation through us, the Kingdom will come. My hope and pray is that **Harvest Partnership – Michigan** gets to be part of the Lord of the Harvest bringing this harvest of souls among us in the Michigan District also.

What is Harvest Partnership – Michigan?

The Harvest Partnership – Michigan is a network of churches (3 to 5 or more) coming together for prayer, mutual support, and mission planning. Through this collaboration, we are intentionally growing disciples, sending harvest workers, and establishing new Gospel outposts and churches.

Why Join a Harvest Table?

Churches that participate in a Harvest Table invest in five key areas:

- **Spiritually:** We meet regularly for prayer, encouragement, and the study of God’s Word.
- **Relationally:** We build friendships and foster trust.
- **Intellectually:** We share insights and best practices for mission.
- **Physically:** We share resources like time, space, and people to support one another and new Gospel work.
- **Financially:** We contribute to the mission according to our abilities.

Like a church potluck, each church brings what they can, joyfully sharing resources to expand God’s Kingdom.

Join Us at the Table

Are you ready to answer the call to “Arise and Shine”? If you’re interested in joining or leading a Harvest Table, please contact me at pastorjim@onthevinechurch.com. Together, we can make a lasting impact in this opportune moment.

For more information, check out this video at bit.ly/3X5LhXI. ■

Rev. James F. Richter serves as pastor at The Vine Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Circuit Convocations an *Outstanding Success*

by Michigan District, LCMS

2024 was the year of the Circuit Convocation. According to the LCMS Handbook, a convocation is a larger gathering of members from circuit congregations during a year in which there is no national or district convention. Sometime during the year, each circuit was to have an event that brings people together—church workers and laity—from all the circuit congregations for a time of encouragement, worship, training, and mission strategy. To encourage circuits to plan a great event, the District partnered with Church Extension Fund to provide up to \$5,000 to each circuit for its convocation (circuits could work together and combine grants). The grants were directed to convocations that focus clearly on mission outreach.

The result was exceptional. President Davis remarks, “We were very excited about congregations having circuit convocations with tons of participation. [It was a] great success across the District to be able to focus on mission work and bringing Convocations back into being.” Jim Saalfeld, Church Extension Fund’s CEO, added: “Overall we were very pleased. Success was outstanding. Over 6,000 people participated all over the District. Great turnout.”

All but four circuits of the District participated. **Twenty-four** Convocations took place in 2024 (some were multi-part), **one** in January 2025; and **one** in March 2025.

Of the detailed reports submitted so far, **10** mentioned the positive response of participants regarding getting together with other circuit churches. Here are some of the comments:

“It was incredibly encouraging for many to know that they are not alone and to be able to worship with other Lutherans from all over the state of Michigan” (Circuits 3 & 4, Timberline and Gladwin).

“Relationships were built between Circuit church members that will help with future collaborative mission endeavors ... One of our Circuit goals is to begin connecting members from our churches who live in geographically similar areas. We believe that collaboration will lead to identifying new opportunities for meeting tangible needs in local communities” (Circuit 12, Flint South).





“The Circuit Churches enjoyed coming together so much that an Ascension Service for the entire Circuit has been scheduled” (Circuit 14, Port Huron).

“The convocation made Monroe and the surrounding villages and towns feel smaller and more connected. This makes the possibility of local mission and service events more likely and feasible, with involvement from multiple congregations” (Circuit 24, Monroe).

“It was a unifying and rallying activity” (Circuit 28, Milan).

“It inspired the area churches as they saw they were not alone. Together, the Lord can work much good through us” (Circuit 32, Traverse City).

“People and families enjoyed the gathering and we were encouraged to plan more events with a unifying mission purpose. They enjoyed worshipping and singing together as well as a good motivational speaker. A follow-up gathering of leaders and pastors has already happened brainstorming and exploring joint mission projects that area churches might participate in together” (Circuit 38 & 39, Muskegon and Holland).

Twelve of the events included *ingatherings* for entities such as the Luke Clinic, Franklin Avenue Mission, the WAVE Project, and the Greater Lansing Food Bank; *service projects* such as planting 600 new trees at a local trail; or *raising funds* for a childcare in Kenya, a new Italian Lutheran hymnal, and a seminarian endowment fund. One event blessed a congregation in North Carolina suffering from Hurricane Helene. One convocation (Circuit 30, Jackson) was entirely based on a service project for CUAAs students, faculty, and staff.

Eight of the events centered on celebration: joint worship services, Oktoberfests, family outings (Lugnuts game; rollerskating), festivals (including a hymn fest and a mission fest with representatives of MOST, LAMP, and

others), or a combination thereof.

Eighteen events were centered around a theme and brought in one or more speakers. **Nine** of these dealt with current issues in society; **the other nine** focused on mission, spiritual disciplines, and leadership forums.

After reviewing all the submitted information, the District and CEF together chose two winners: 1) Circuits 15 & 16 (Macomb North & Macomb Northwest), with their “One Hope Worship & Community Gathering” (award for largest convocation) and Circuits 38 & 39 (Muskegon & Holland), with their “Joining Jesus” event (award for most creative convocation). The winners each received a \$5,000 award “to carry on that work and to continue to invest as a circuit in mission outreach in their communities,” says President Davis.

Congratulations to the winners and to all circuits that participated! ■





Attributes of a Leader

by LWML 2021-2023 Group and Leader Development Committee

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

No two groups of people have the same abilities because they are made up of unique individuals, each with their own set of God-given gifts. God has placed them together to achieve the plans that He has made for them. However, there are certain qualities that can be helpful in every effective leader:

Listening to and learning from others in your group can bring about meaningful discussion that could turn a good idea into a plan of active service. *“Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent” (Proverbs 11:12).*

Encourage others to use their talents and help channel them to where they are most effective within the group. *“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).*

An agreeable attitude will go a long way in keeping a discussion moving and finding a successful compromise when necessary. *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).*

Devote time to prayer. Pray for the guidance God has promised to send, listen for His instructions and move forward expecting Him to be there with you. *“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).*

Enthusiasm in your service to the Lord will set an

energetic example for your group. When your energy is lagging, explain to your group what you are feeling and allow them to serve and support you. Don’t rob them of an opportunity for service. *“...doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man” (Ephesians 6:6b–7).*

Rejoice in your role as a leader. God has placed you in this position for a reason and He will not abandon you. He has planned your life down to the smallest detail and will walk with you every step of the way. *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).*

Pray for and develop as many of these qualities as possible within yourself. Look for other leaders in your group with strong leadership qualities different from your own; mentor them and let them lead with you. Together your group can serve the Lord with gladness. ■

This article, written by the LWML 2021-2023 Group and Leader Development Committee, was originally sent out to LWML Newsletter subscribers. Group and Leader Development Committee members are: Christina Bean, Elaine Engelman, Jennifer Gierke, Brianne Stahlecker, and Marie Chow.



Church Extension Fund



Greetings from Church Extension Fund!

We hope you enjoy this first edition of the new Michigan in Touch and CEF Spotlight. CEF spearheaded this initiative in collaboration with the Michigan District to enhance how we share ministry updates. Together, we want you to be encouraged by the many great ministry stories happening across Michigan and to see how your time, talents, and treasure are helping to build the Kingdom right here in our state.

CEF's updates will remain consistent with what you have seen in the past. You will read stories about recent building projects, grants, and services CEF offers, as well as important updates and events beneficial for you to know about. In all this, we will showcase that while CEF operates with sound business principles, it remains first and foremost a ministry, serving as trusted and innovative stewards of financial resources since 1901. For 124 years, CEF has been a trusted partner of Lutheran churches, schools, and ministries across Michigan, and we look forward to continuing to build meaningful relationships into the future.

Blessings!

James R. Saalfeld, CEO

Do Your Investments...



Build this

“Banks are building more branches for the first time in a decade”

4/27/24 - via Yahoo! Finance



or that?



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“JPMorgan...announced plans to build 500 new branches over the next 3 years.”

4/27/24 - via Yahoo! Finance

Building the Future... In Him!



Church Extension Fund

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APRIL 2025

Faith, Perseverance, and Renewal: Good Shepherd's Journey Home

How does Church Extension Fund help congregations? Good Shepherd, Lake Orion found that CEF is there for ministries in both good and difficult times alike, and takes steps most lenders would never consider.

These ministry-minded additions helped Good Shepherd share the gospel with even more members of its community and stands as a testament to the dedication of its leaders and, above all, to God's faithfulness to the congregation. Things were going along swimmingly until the mid-2000's when regional economic realities changed the ministry landscape and membership numbers were significantly impacted. Pastoral leadership changed, many people moved out of the area, but loan payments from the building projects remained. These amounts became a burden as the membership and giving shrank to historic lows.

CEF spent more than 10 years working with Good Shepherd with various tools to keep the ministry operating. Finally, in late 2019, CEF took the ultimate step that most lenders would never consider - taking over ownership of the building through a Deed-in-Lieu of Foreclosure. Under this arrangement, CEF takes the building in exchange for the debt. But then CEF does something no secular lender would do.



Organized in 1971, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lake Orion was an outgrowth of the Michigan District's desire to establish a church in the "Pontiac North" mission field. Strategically set in a growing area, and just a few miles from the interstate, Good Shepherd was ready to seek ways to impact the lives of others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like the lifespan of many ministries,

Good Shepherd experienced some exciting highs and some particularly challenging lows.

At its founding, CEF loans supported the purchase of the land, a parsonage and the construction of a new sanctuary. As growth occurred and membership grew, the congregation called on CEF again to help finance an expansion that included a new school and Family Life Center.

They leased the building back to the congregation with the option to buy back the building for the cost of the mortgage amount. This allowed Good Shepherd time to get their finances in order and work on changes to its organizational structure. Most lenders would have begun foreclosure proceedings years beforehand, without any regard to the ministry and mission of Good Shepherd. Fortunately, the decision to borrow from CEF over the years proved to be smart choices as CEF is, first and foremost, a ministry itself. CEF understands the hard times a ministry can go through and wanted to do everything possible to keep Good Shepherd from closing.

In 2021, the congregation received excellent news. Pastor Ben Oelschlager accepted his first call out of seminary to Good Shepherd. Having been without a permanent pastor for a few years, this was an answered



In November 2024, Good Shepherd leadership bought back their building!

prayer. "In the late 2010s, the conversations around Good Shepherd were around merger and closure. Nothing brought that conversation to light more than being unable to afford the building," says Oelschlager. Committed members started working with Pastor Ben on how to rebuild the ministry. It was the beginning of a great turnaround.

Even on the heels of COVID, Good Shepherd began to see gains in their Pre-School numbers, which helped the overall financial situation.

More families started attending services, and the members who saw the church through their darkest times began to see glimmers of light on the horizon. Over the next 2 years, membership growth and giving allowed for hopeful discussions that one day the congregation could buy back the building from CEF. "Good Shepherd has definitely found its sense of hope and perseverance these last few years as the possibility of reacquiring the building became more real," says Pastor Ben.



The pre-school ministry has been a blessing to the community.



“Taking the step of buying back the building would show this congregation that God does have plans for a Lutheran church here in Lake Orion.”

During the time that Pastor Ben has been there, the congregation has more than doubled their weekly worship attendance from when CEF took over ownership of the building. Toward the end of 2022, the leadership team approached CEF about the possibility of reacquiring the building. While CEF did not believe they were yet in a financial position to afford the mortgage, there was now hope that a repurchase of the facility was a real possibility. In the next year and a half, the positive trends continued. CEF frequently met with church leadership and mapped out a plan for Good Shepherd to require the ministry. Finally, on November 22, 2024, Good Shepherd bought back

their building! Not only were they in a strong enough financial position to do so, but they also had funds to make an immediate pay down on the mortgage right from the start! Praise God! “Since we signed the mortgage in November, there is a sense of relief mixed with a desire to keep going, and see what God is leading the congregation to do next,” Oelschlager said.

This effort took numerous hours of meeting, planning, struggle, and effort on the part of dozens of congregational leaders and CEF. Says Pastor Ben, “CEF has been a real blessing to this congregation. We have had multiple treasurers and council presidents involved in conversations with them [CEF] over the years and each comes back saying how amazing it is that the organization holding our building, and now our loan, has Christ at the center of its

mission too. I don’t know too many people who can say they look forward to meeting with the organization that holds their mortgage, but we can say that with CEF.” Good Shepherd is now on solid financial footing and has a path forward being led by God. To learn more about the congregation, visit www.goodshepherdlakeorion.net.

This is just one of the many success stories that CEF can tell because of the good and faithful God that we serve every day. With Christ as the center of its mission, CEF would not have been able to help Good Shepherd in the myriad ways it did without the partnership of our investors and the churches and ministries of the Michigan District. We pray that there are many more stories of restoration and rehabilitation like Good Shepherd in the years and decades ahead. To God be the Glory!



“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”

Psalm 126:3 (NIV)



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Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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

2025 Spring Appeal

What shaped your faith in your youth? Or what did you notice in your neighbors or teachers or other adults that made Jesus known to you?

“... when I was being made in secret ... Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me (Psalm 139:15–16).

Truth is, God knew you and had a plan for you as you were “being made in secret.” If your parents raised you in a Christian home, you worshipped in church, read the Bible, prayed with your family, and served in fellowship with others. If you didn’t grow up this way, you undoubtedly came into contact with people who were “different” and demonstrated genuine care for you.

Friends, this is why I encourage you to keep your “eyes on Jesus.” Our lives are filled with opportunities to deliver God’s life-changing Gospel. Let me share the ways we focus on changing and strengthening young lives in the Michigan District.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

The Michigan District has a network of 126 early childhood centers, 66 elementary schools, and 5 high schools that serve families in our churches and neighborhoods. Along with Superintendent of Schools Travis Grulke, our principals and teachers participate in annual District training and incorporate discipleship and service opportunities into their curriculum. Every day, students learn about the love of Jesus and the opportunity to grow in His Word and to serve Him.

“Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Psalm 34:11).

The Michigan District’s urban ministry through Acts 2 Enterprise (A2E) gives children an opportunity to learn a new sport or activity, receive a nourishing meal, and learn about Jesus. In Detroit, missionary-at-large Rev. Chris Bodley leads volunteers in summer camp programs where children experience the love of Jesus and take their excitement home to share with their families.

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Continued on reverse side



A2E Summer Camp

Considering the pressures that junior high and high school youth face, the Michigan District is committed to providing a place of support and strength in numbers at District-sponsored youth gatherings. Students learn, talk, play, listen, and connect with each other and with adult chaperones to focus on Jesus and His plan for them. At a critical life stage, the Holy Spirit can and has led students to make important life decisions after these experiences.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed” (2 Timothy 3:14).

Sons and daughters of Michigan District congregations attending LCMS Concordia Universities or LCMS Seminaries for church work programs are eligible to receive annual District scholarship assistance. As the largest district in the LCMS, we have the privilege of raising up future leaders in the church who will be called to many roles and many places. Our prayers, encouragement, and financial support help them focus on Great Commission preparation.

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

Building on the heritage of Lutheran education, we believe that students on Michigan’s college campuses need connections to spiritual support during their higher education journey. The Michigan District will expand campus ministry throughout the state to support nearby congregations that create innovative, effective ways to build student relationships and share the love of Jesus with them. We are also exploring the opportunity to plant a vocational school in the District that will help students pursue personal career paths and know and share Jesus in the communities where they work.



Junior High Youth Gathering attendees pose for a selfie.

One of the most important things we can do for our youth is to provide consistent presence and support in their lives. Through your financial assistance, the Michigan District can continue to build up the programs that bring Jesus into their lives in powerful ways.

Will you help us care for God’s children by giving a gift today?

Gifts to the Michigan District are not meant to replace or reduce 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 you, as God’s child, know that He loves you dearly.

... eyes on Jesus ...

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



Concordia Education students

© Hope Rickardus, Concordia Nebraska



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 _____

- I would like my gift to support:
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 - Greatest Need (Unrestricted)
 - Professional Church Worker Scholarships
 - District Youth Gathering Support
 - Campus Ministry
 - A2E Support
 - Church Worker Care
 - Other _____

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LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

Who is Jesus?

Every month, the question of “Who Is Jesus” is Googled 2.7 million times! Lutheran Hour Ministries is a global mission organization that helps answer that question as it shares Christ’s love in more than 60 countries, often bringing His message of hope to places where no other Christian organizations are present.

The Michigan District Lutheran Laymen’s League (LLL) invites you to learn more on how to share the love of Jesus with others at its convention this spring. Under the theme “CONNECT,” the gathering will take place April 25–26, 2025, at Faith, Grand Blanc.

The keynote speaker is Jeff Craig-Meyer, President of United States Ministries. He provides dedicated leadership to LHM’s ministry operations in the U.S. and oversees all administrative functions for LHM’s global headquarters, including constituent advancement, finance, fundraising, human resources, and information technology. Craig-Meyer also holds the title of President of The Lutheran Hour Ministries Foundation.

The festivities for the weekend start with an opening worship service on Friday, April 25, at 7 p.m. Convention registration opens at 9 a.m. on Saturday,

April 26. The convention begins at 9:30 a.m. and concludes at 4 p.m.

The registration fee is \$10 per person and \$5 for each additional family member. Lunch is provided. Visit lhm.org/mi-lll and complete the simple online registration form and payment. For more information, contact Dennis Engelhard, Michigan LLL President, at 989.670.8028 or dennisengelhard59@gmail.com. Please register no later than April 18, 2025.

Please keep February 1, 2026, on your calendar for the 2026 Lutheran Hour Rally taking place at St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth. More information to come!



LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

- CHRIST IS RISEN! ALLELUIA! -

HE IS RISEN INDEED!

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE
MICHIGAN DISTRICT LWML

Lutheran Women
in Mission
MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Registration for the 41st Biennial
2025 LWML Convention is Open!
Regular pricing ends April 30,
2025.

Growing
IN GOD'S
grace
2 PETER 3:18

June 26-29, 2025
CHI Health Center
Omaha, NE

The Blessing of Hope

Photo courtesy of Hope, St. Helen



In 1967, a group of faithful Lutheran worshippers started having services in the St. Helen township hall. They were served by Rev. Martin Schliebe of St. John, West Branch.

• In 1973, Rev. William Chellew became pastor of St. John and continued serving the group at St. Helen.

- On January 19, 1975, the group voted on and accepted the name Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church. One week later, a declaration of Solemn Intent and Overture was adopted by the members.
- On November 30, 1980, after holding services for 13 years at various locations, the first worship service was held in Hope's brand new church building.

For the past 50 years, Hope has been a great blessing to its members and the surrounding community. Over the years, the congregation was led by faithful shepherds: Rev. William Schliebe, Rev. William Chellew, Rev. Horst Kasten, Rev. Paul Ruediger, Rev. Karl Neff, Rev. Timothy Olson, Rev. Randolph Schnack, Rev. Andrew Gruenhagen, Rev. Rodney Morrison Jr., and Rev. Carl Petzold.

Hope will observe its 50th anniversary on Sunday, May 18, with a special worship service at 11 a.m. followed by a dinner. For more information or to RSVP, call the church office at 989.389.7715.

Faith and Mental Health Conference

The Lutheran Foundation invites you to its 2025 *LookUp Conference on Faith and Mental Health*. The conference takes place on Tuesday, May 6, at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum Conference Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. The conference offers presentations, conversations, and breakout sessions with church leaders and experts who are working to integrate faith and mental health in the Lutheran and broader faith community.

This one-day event will give pastors, church workers, and church members practical ideas in providing care, comfort, and support for people in congregation and ministry settings.

For more information or to register, visit lookupconference.com.

Free Ukrainian Resources for Sharing the Gospel

Great news! The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (an LCMS Recognized Service Organization) has received a huge shipment of books carrying two FREE new



Photo courtesy of Lutheran Heritage Foundation

resources available in Ukrainian. This includes the classic children's Bible storybook *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories* and *Best of Portals of Prayer*. These materials are available to any LCMS church, mission, or individual who wants to share the Good News with their Ukrainian-speaking neighbors. To order, send an email to info@LHFmissions.org or call 800.554.0723.

Last Call for Lutheran Summer Music 2025

Enrollment for this summer is over 80% full, but there is still time for young musicians to apply and for you to nominate a student. Lutheran Summer Music is the nation's premier faith-based music academy for high school musicians. Students come together from around the country for a joyful summer of music-making through large ensembles (band, choir, orchestra), chamber music, private lessons, elective classes, and using their talents in performance and worship.

This year's academy takes place June 22-July 20 at Valparaiso University. For more information, visit LSMacademy.org/program.

1 Kings 19 Convention Bible Study



Dr. Walter A. Maier, III

Prepare your congregation for the District Convention with a dynamic 30-minute video Bible study based on Elijah's relationship with God in 1 Kings 19. Developed to be used during your adult Bible classes before June 22-24, 2025, Dr. Walter A. Maier, III will bring inspiring insights, comfort, and enduring truths from the life of Elijah, showing how God works so that we are *Nourished for the Journey* in our daily lives!

www.michigandistrict.org/convention

Available in
May of 2025

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. Phillip Rittner II (Columbia City, IN) to Vacancy, St. Paul, Centreville
Rev. John Schwartz (New Boston, MI) to Sole, Prince of Peace, Pineville, LA

Status & Title Changes

Rev. Dr. Todd Jones (Milan, MI) to Candidate
Rev. Bertram Lewis (Elyria, OH) to Emeritus
Rev. Jason Toman, SMP (Lawton, MI) to Candidate

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Bertram Lewis (Elyria, OH) to Ohio District

Called Home

Rev. Warren Arndt
Rev. Elroy Brockopp
Rev. Darowin Cordes
Rev. Daryl Etheridge
Rev. James Fleming
Rev. Dr. Mark Hill

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

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Andrzejewski, Rachel (Cq., Concordia, Seward, NE) to St. Peter, Macomb
Hansard, Christie (Faith, Grand Blanc) to Michigan District, Ann Arbor (part-time)
Hardies, Karla (St. Paul, Boca Raton, FL) to ISJ Academy, Grand Rapids
Schultz, Jane (Candidate) to Trinity, Utica
Smith, Jennifer (Trinity, Utica) to St. Michael's, Richville
Thomas, Rebecca (Concordia, Mequon, WI) to Trinity, Clinton Township

Change of Status

Aughe, Kent (Huntington Woods, Huntington Woods) to Emeritus
Szwarc, Elizabeth (Trinity, Clinton Township) to Candidate

Transferred Into District

Boewe, Amy (Oklahoma District) as Candidate
Schultz, Josiah (Pacific Southwest District) to Our Savior, Gladwin

Transferred Out of District

Masengarb, Virginia (Emeritus) to South Wisconsin District
Schave, Kimberly (Concordia, Ann Arbor) to Missouri District

Resigned From the Roster

DeLage, Deborah
Korbely, Marie
McDonald, Andrea

Called Home

Grimpo, R. Dwain
Gugel, Ruth
Wuertz, Duane



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-3098

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

Join the 7,000



As we approach the 2025 Michigan District Convention, we invite you to join us in prayer! Our goal is to have over 7,000 members of the Michigan District lifting up the preparations, pre-convention meetings, and all attendees—both before and throughout the three days of the convention. Will you join us? Sign up to receive a prayer packet via email, complete with prayer prompts and more!



www.michigandistrict.org/conventionprayer

Calendar of Events

APRIL 2025

- 5 Regional Pre-Convention Assemblies
Detroit, Livonia, Pinconning, Grand Rapids
- 13 Palm Sunday
- 17 Maundy Thursday
- 18 Good Friday
District Office Closed
- 20 Easter Sunday
- 25–27 The Katie
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City
- 26 LLL Michigan District Convention
Grand Blanc

MAY 2025

- 3 Convention Floor Committees
District Office, Ann Arbor
- 6–7 West Pastors Conference
Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City
- 13–14 South & East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 14–15 Circuit Visitors Conference
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 17 Regional Track Meets
Locations TBD

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

- 19 Board of Directors Meeting
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 20–21 North & East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 31 State Track Meet
Concordia University Ann Arbor

JUNE 2025

- 16 FLAME Conference
Ann Arbor
- 22-24 Michigan District LCMS Convention
Concordia University Ann Arbor
- 26-28 English District LCMS Convention
Concordia University Ann Arbor

JULY 2025

- 19-23 National Youth Gathering
New Orleans, Louisiana
- 28-30 Higgins Lake Conference
Higgins Lake